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Rep.-elect questions timing of bill that wants return of AMP. PAGE 2

House passes bill that prohibits use of Styrofoam containers. PAGE 8

75¢

'A step closer to normalcy'

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A United Airlines flight that landed at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport early yesterday morning held the CNMI's first batch of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines that will jumpstart the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s plan to start administering the vaccines tomorrow, Dec. 19, at the Alternate Care Site at the Kanoa Resort. The vaccine shots will be free. See STEP on Page 4

Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. immunization program director John Moreno, left, and Subroto Banerji, CHCC chief operation officer, check out the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine that arrived in the CNMI early yesterday morning. JUSTINE NAUTA

IPI faces new breach of contract suit

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Another subcontractor is suing Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC for breach of contract and is demanding that IPI pay over $700,000.

Fritz Pacific Project Development Services, through its sole proprietor, Alfredo Cabael, filed a complaint against IPI for breach of manpower staffing subcontract with the U.S District Court for the NMI.

Fritz Pacific is suing IPI for $745,303.94 worth of nonpay-

See IPI on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 6pm, Dec. 17, 2020

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,168	0	7,168
Recovered	6,513	0	6,513
Active	536	0	536
Deaths	119	0	119
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested		96,512	

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	113	0	113
Traced via Travel Screening	86	0	86
Traced via Community Screening	27	0	27
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested		22,633*	
Days since last community transmission		121	

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Health Care Corp.

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

DPL now reviewing Hyatt's proposal

» Concepcion-Teregeyo says they already got all docs they need

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Public Lands Secretary Marianne Concepcion- Teregeyo disclosed Wednesday that Hyatt Regency Saipan has already submitted all the documents that DPL needs regarding its expiring land lease in Garapan.

Concepcion- Teregeyo

Concepcion-Teregeyo said in an interview that the current lessee, Saipan Portopia Hotel Corp., which owns the Hyatt, submitted the missing documents last week. She declined to disclose

See DPL on Page 4

EDA OKs $10.7M for NMC

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. Economic Development Administration has awarded $10.7 million to the Northern Marianas College to build a three-story, typhoon resistant, Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant Workforce Development and Training Center.

RELATED NEWS
- Kilili congratulates NMC for getting $10.7M grant. PAGE 3

The demolition of 14 buildings damaged by Super Ty-

See EDA on Page 4

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A boutique that also doubles as a beauty salon is pulling out all the stops this holiday season.

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South Korea adds more than 1,000 infections to its coronavirus caseload for the second day.

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No need to take it to the max. That's the new message of the leaders of the U.K.'s four nations.

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Local

Rep.-elect questions timing of bill that wants return of AMP

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Representative-elect Celina R. Babauta, a Democrat, has expressed disappointment with a bill that will compel the CNMI governor to request the U.S. Interior secretary to transfer the administration of the 133-acre American Memorial Park to the CNMI government.

Speaking in her personal capacity as a Saipan resident during public comments portion of Tuesday's House of Representatives session, Babauta questioned the timing of the bill, noting that it comes at a time when the Hyatt Regency Saipan, which sits on a public property adjacent to the American Memorial Park and whose land lease will expire in 12 months, is being made to "jump through hoops" and is being asked "unreasonable concessions" by the Department of Public Lands just so it could renew its lease.

» Representatives did not act on bill

Babauta said the hurdles in place are designed to dismantle Hyatt's owner, Saipan Portopia Hotel Corp., and the Hyatt brand in the CNMI, while ignoring the reality that the hotel has become a trustworthy and devoted partner on the island.

She said 98% of Hyatt's staff are of Northern Marianas descent families. "No other hotel, past or present, can boast such regard for our community. As a CNMI daughter, I ask you to think about the repercussions of your actions today," said Babauta, who is representative-elect of Precinct 1.

Babauta urged the House to defer acting on House Bill 21-119 and conduct a thorough public education as to the underlying intentions of the legislation.

She said people are asking why this is even a priority and why now when there are other pressing issues that lawmakers' valuable time would be better spent on. "Look at the state of our schools, our roads, the power plant, our health facilities. Look at the state of any infrastructure our government has taken back over the years: La Fiesta Mall, Mariana Resort & Spa, among others. They are in states of disrepair," she added.

Babauta questioned how this bill is a priority when thousands of people have been displaced and negatively affected due to job loss. "This should not be a priority for our government leaders at this time. You should prioritize how to get more federal funding into the hands of our citizens, residents and nonresidents alike," she told lawmakers.

The bill, which was on the bill calendar for action, was later not acted on.

Celina Babauta's husband, Rep. Franklin R. Babauta (Ind-Saipan), was at the session.

Babauta said that taking back AMP will have not stimulate the economy right now, but getting money into the hands of residents will. "As leaders you should be trying to figure out how to cut government spending because we are all expecting tougher times in the days ahead," she added.

Rep. Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero (R-Saipan) introduced the bill last July. He was not present during Tuesday's session. Several others co-authored the legislation.

The National Park Service maintains and has jurisdiction over the park.

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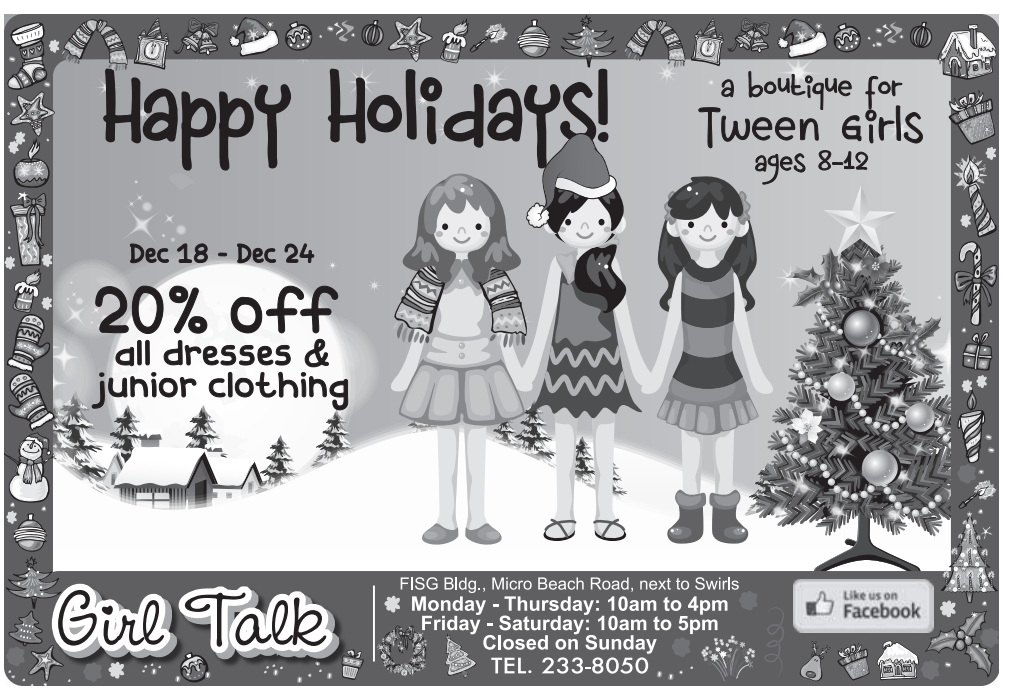
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Kilili congratulates NMC for getting $10.7M grant

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) congratulated the Northern Marianas College administration yesterday on the award of a $10.68 million grant from the 2019 Disaster Supplemental Appropriation (U.S. Public Law 116-20). The money, totaling $10,681,796, will be used for a Workforce Development and Training Center at the college.

"Within four weeks of Congress making disaster recovery funds available to the Marianas for Super Typhoon Yutu, NMC applied for this money," Sablan explained. "But it has taken the Trump administration 18 months to approve it—over two years after Yutu struck."

Sablan said the Economic Development Administration, which is the responsible federal agency, still has six more disaster recovery grant application from the Marianas it has not acted on. The pending applications are worth about $85 million.

Yesterday's grant will pay for the construction of two educational and workforce training facilities at the college, according to EDA, with fully equipped classroom, laboratory, and office spaces. The center will be powered by solar panels with an auxiliary generator.

The new facilities will allow for academic and research dedicated to food science, plant biotechnology, entomology, and anthropometry with the goal of increasing employment opportunities. EDA says the project will also support resiliency against future natural disasters, spur private investment, and provide long-term economic stability. ***(PR)***

Scheduled power interruption on Tuesday

There will be a scheduled power interruption on Tuesday, Dec. 22, from 9am to 1pm, affecting Garapan (Filooris Ave.)

This is to de-energize utility lines so that linemen of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. can replace a transformer and a rotted primary power pole on Filooris Ave. Because of the scale of work that will be performed, CUC asks travelers to take alternate routes or to exercise caution when driving through the working area.

For more information, contact the CUC Hotline at 236-4333 or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates. ***(PR)***

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GO WELL

Gas prices surpass pre-COVID days

The CNMI saw another gas price increase yesterday, just two weeks before the start of the new year and making gas prices officially higher than pre-COVID-19 prices.

Mobile Oil Mariana Inc. and Shell Marianas raised their fuel prices by 10 cents yesterday morning, boosting prices 5 cents higher than pre-COVID days.

Gas prices went up from $3.78 for a gallon of Extra fuel to $3.88 per gallon.

The lowest price of fuel in the CNMI before the government shutdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic was $3.83.

According to 23-year-old motorist, who asked to be named only as Sarah, it's unfortunate that after over four months, gas had to be increased just two weeks before Christmas. "Couldn't they have kept prices the same until next year? It's the holidays. I feel like it's bad timing," she said.

A 32-year-old motorist who lives in Tanapag expected the price bump since the price freeze was lifted just weeks prior. "I'm not surprised. Makes no difference, though, because gas kept increasing with or without a price freeze," he said.

Earlier this month, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres lifted the price freeze, about nine months after the CNMI closed its borders in mid-March.

In his executive order earlier this month, Torres said that, nine months since first ordering the price freeze, many CNMI businesses have adapted new supply chains to bring products to the CNMI

With the ready availability of products, the threat of shortages and price gouging no longer threatens the community, he said.

Torres' Executive Order 2020-03 that declared the price freeze was meant to protect CNMI residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Torres had said that protecting the health and safety of CNMI residents includes protecting their ability to provide for their families during this unanticipated economic downturn as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. ***(Kimberly A. Bautista)***

New website for Marianas history books

All publications by Micronesian Productions are now available online through Amazon Books in Kindle format. A complete listing may be found at https://www.micronesianpubs.com/default.asp?secID=2

This includes the Pictorial History of Guam trilogy: *The Americanization of Guam: 1898-1918*; *The Sacrifice: 1919-1943*; and *Liberation 1944,* as well as *Saipan, a Brief History* in English, Chinese and Korean and its latest publication, *Tinian and The Bomb.*

Hardcopies of *Tinian and The Bomb* are still available at BestSeller Books on Saipan and Guam.

The book's author, Don A. Farrell, said the website was made possible by a COVID-19 grant from the Northern Marianas Humanities Council, which is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities, and with help from Angil Design, Inc.

"Please feel free to use the 'Contact Us' section to offer comments or suggestions about our website. We appreciate constructive criticism. With your help, we hope to build this site into a reference center for the history of the Mariana Islands," said Farrell. "Please share https://www.micronesianpubs.com/ with your Facebook friends, and help spread the history of Marianas." ***(PR)***

STEP

From Page 1

CHCC chief operation officer Subroto Banerji confirmed that the vaccines are free of charge as this is in response to a public health emergency. "There's no cost to the public for this," he said.

Pfizer's vaccine is a two-dose vaccination series, given 21 days apart. According to Banerji, the first shipment of five boxes that contain 4,800 doses will be administered to 2,400 individuals, allowing CHCC to administer both doses A and dose B. Banerji said they are expecting the second shipment of vaccines as early as next week. "The plan is to try to ship out to the CNMI weekly," said Banerji.

Once the U.S. Federal Drug Administration grants Emergency Use Authorization to the COVID-19 vaccine that is being developed by Moderna Inc., the CNMI will also expect a shipment from them, Banerji said.

Due to the CNMI's location, Banerji stated that they are in talks with the national group that's handling the vaccines' distribution, Operation Warp Speed, on how they could have the vaccines shipped in bulk instead of a weekly shipment, "perhaps taking four weeks and making it one shipment. …We'll be doing this a couple more times."

He assured that the vaccines are highly secured at the Commonwealth Health Center and the room where they are being stored is not accessible to the public. The room is a card-accessible room that is only open to a limited number people. The COVID-19 Task Force is working with the Department of Public Safety and CHCC's security to monitor the vaccine.

"Every movement of these vaccines will be under secure monitoring and oversight. So I believe we're doing our best to maintain the security chain," said Banerji.

He said the vaccines' arrival is a symbol that the CNMI is "one step closer to normalcy."

The plan is for the vaccines to be administered in three phases:

■ Phase 1: An estimated 1,600 people working in health care settings, first responder agencies, and vulnerable populations.

■ Phase 2: Expanding to essential workers and the general population. The essential worker population includes but is not limited to: Private pharmacy staff, Public School System instructional staff, PSS school support staff, PSS school administrators, and child care workers.

■ Phase 3: Continuation of the general population and possible vaccination opportunity for children under the age of 15.

What now?

For the first group of people who will get the vaccine tomorrow, CHCC will focus on health care workers in the public and private sector.

The first group, 1A, contain approximately 1,600 individuals and that includes CHCC staff, private providers, and first responders.

"We'll be reaching out to all the private providers, which includes dentists, pharmacy, rehab, everyone that's licensed in the CNMI who provides health care. Then we'll be also factoring first-line responders, and… long term care," said Banerji.

Since the CNMI doesn't have long-term care facilities, Banerji said that CHCC's intention is to include the homebound *man'amko*, and other individuals who are homebound. CHCC will be reaching out to the Department of Community and Culture Affairs to help the people who are homebound to register for the vaccination.

Individuals will have to register for vaccination through the registration page at vaccinatecnmi.com. CHCC will provide instructions for the registration. According to CHCC chief executive officer Esther Muña, the registration process will be similar to the community-based testing registration.

Training for vaccine administration

Banerji confirmed that CHCC staff have undergone training in the last couple of weeks at the Medical Care and Treatment Site at CHCC's upper parking lot. Additionally, CHCC staff have been provided with videos on how to administer the vaccine.

Today, CHCC will be doing a much deeper dive on training and getting ready to administer the vaccine tomorrow. Banerji stated that they have been involving their pharmacy team, nursing team, providers—essentially everyone who have been working with vaccines for "all their career."

Banerji added that the vaccine comes in prefilled syringes. "If they're in the vials and we have to draw from the vial into syringes, you have to do that all in one step. Saturday is going to be a really good kick-off for us to test all those different processes," said Banerji.

DPL

From Page 1

what those documents are.

"We're reviewing their proposal and, right now, we're crunching numbers," Concepcion-Teregeyo said. "They've already submitted what we need. Let's put it that way."

When asked about an estimated timeline on when the negotiations with Hyatt will be completed, Concepcion-Teregeyo said she can't tell as DPL is reviewing several proposals right now. "Marpi properties [proposal] is one, Hyatt is the other one that we just received, right. So we are working on it," Concepcion-Teregeyo said.

DPL recently disclosed that they already received an official proposal packet from Hyatt.

Deveney Dela Cruz, special assistant to the DPL secretary, earlier stated that in order for DPL to start the negotiation process for a new matured lease agreement, they must first receive an official proposal from the current lessee.

Dela Cruz then disclosed that DPL only received an official proposal packet from Hyatt's current lessee, Saipan Portopia Hotel Corp., last Oct. 20, but the package was incomplete.

Last October, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said that he would like to see Hyatt get the extension

Hyatt's 40-year public land lease will expire in December 2021. The land lease of Fiesta Resort & Spa, which is located adjacent to Hyatt, is supposed to expire in June 2021, but it just got a new 40-year lease.

The recent enactment of Public Law 20-84 increases the terms of public land leases for up to 40 years, plus an extension of 15 years, for a total of 55 years. It also authorizes certain public land leases to be amended and extended for up to 55 years.

EDA

From Page 1

phoon Yutu at NMC's As Terlaje campus is now complete and makes way for the 20,158 square foot, three-story building that will be built on the site, which will house NMC's nursing and business programs and Center for Innovation.

This project is being touted as a means to help NMC respond to the economic impact of Super Typhoon Yutu by expanding the training of skilled workers to meet the current and future demands of local employers.

According to NMC interim president Frankie Eliptico, NMC has been working in the past two years to secure funds to help NMC build a brand-new campus. He said that EDA is funding one building and the U.S. Department of Education will be funding another structure. The Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery funds will also be funding some classrooms.

The business section will include "critical workforce" development programs that include accounting, computer applications, hospitality management, and other business management courses. The nursing section will include NMC's degree, associate, and certificate programs in nursing.

"The pandemic is causing an increase in demand for health care workers. We are working to secure partnerships with local and other off-island institutions to implement new programs that build up the health care capacity of the CNMI," said Eliptico. This includes radiology technicians, medical technicians, laboratory technicians, and other related health care industry workforce capacity activities.

According to Eliptico, NMC is working as fast as it can to make sure the buildings go up in the quickest time possible. They want to make sure the buildings are engineered and designed so that the buildings can withstand future typhoons, and will be ready to incorporate future innovations in energy efficiency and other considerations.

"The next step that we're already undertaking is the facilities master plan…which will help design the footprint of where certain buildings will go," said Eliptico.

The timeline to start on the buildings is in a couple of years. he said that NMC doesn't want to rush anything, but they are carefully assessing how they can compress the timeline while ensuring that the building is well-engineered, well-built, and well-managed.

"The grant funds will help Northern Marianas College build resilient, technologically-advanced, and energy-efficient facilities to meet the workforce and education needs of the Northern Mariana Islands," said Gov. Ralph DLG Torres "We are thankful for the Trump administration for their help and support of NMC's long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts. The new facilities funded by EDA will help NMC expand and sustain critical programs for our community moving forward as the college commemorates its 40th anniversary in 2021."

EDA is an agency in the U.S. Department of Commerce that provides grants and technical assistance to economically distressed communities.

IPI

From Page 1

ment of the balance amount for manpower staffing services, interest, fees, and costs.

"Despite endeavors in good faith on the part of Fritz Pacific to resolve the dispute prior to filing this case, IPI refused to honor its obligation to Fritz Pacific," Cabael stated in his complaint.

According to the complaint, IPI hired Fritz Pacific to provide manpower staffing services for the hotel-casino construction project in Garapan. IPI and Fritz Pacific entered into two successive contracts beginning around June or August 2018.

As part of their agreement, Fritz Pacific was to provide IPI with skilled plumbers, carpenters, masons, electricians, welders, skilled helpers, tower crane operators, HE mechanics, mechanic helpers, equipment electronics technicians, tractor trailer operators, boom truck operators, riggers, and two laborers.

"All have met the demand and desired quality workmanship were performed within a reasonable timeframe expected by IPI," Cabael said

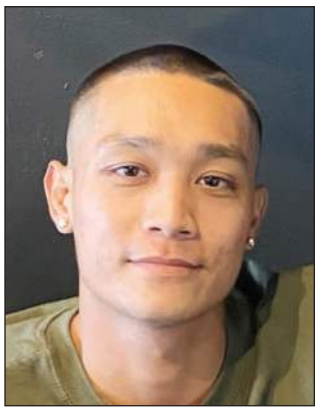
It added that staffing hours, statement of accounts, billing, invoices, and payroll records from Fritz Pacific were confirmed with IPI-executed timesheets.

However, Cabael said IPI only made partial payments on the billings and invoices.

Around November 2019, IPI had a new company, AM Group, take over as its manpower staffing company, effectively terminating Fritz Pacific's staffing services.

4 UOG ROTC cadets to commission as Army officers

University of Guam ROTC cadet Kortney T. Camacho will be commissioned as an Army officer during a private family ceremony on Dec. 22 on Saipan. UOG



University of Guam ROTC cadet Michael C. Muna will be commissioned as an Army officer during a private family ceremony on Dec. 19 in Guam. UOG

University of Guam ROTC cadet Vicente Paulino will be commissioned as an Army officer during a private family ceremony on Dec. 19 in Guam. UOG

University of Guam ROTC cadet Abrahamson Takeshi will be commissioned as an Army officer during a private family ceremony on Dec. 19 in Guam. UOG

Four cadets from the University of Guam's Reserve Officers Training Corps program, including a graduate of Kagman High School, will commission as second lieutenants in the U.S. Army as soon as they graduate from the university this month.

The cadets will become second lieutenants in the active-duty Army or the Guam Army National Guard. The cadets will also be assigned their branches, or military specialties, as part of the ceremony.

Earning their commission as U.S. Army second lieutenants are:

■ **Kortney T. Camacho**

Armor Officer, Active Duty Army

Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

Graduated from Guam High School

■ **Michael C. Muna**

Signal Corps Officer, Active Duty Army

Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

Graduated from Kagman High School in Saipan

■ **Vicente G.T. Paulino**

Engineer Officer, Active Duty Army

Bachelor of Science, Criminal Justice and Public Administration

Graduated from Southern High School

■ **Abrahamson T. Takeshi**

Infantry Officer, Guam Army National Guard

Bachelor of Science, Criminal Justice and Public Administration

Graduated from Okkodo High School

Their commissioning, which will be held as private family events due to the pandemic, is the culmination of the ROTC program that the cadets undertook while studying at the University of Guam. The cadets developed their leadership skills in the ROTC classroom and field training environments, and the hallmark of the ROTC curriculum is the real-world application of the leadership instruction. The cadets also participated in various paid summer internships and military training courses in the continental United States and across the world to hone their abilities to lead people in challenging environments.

"These four cadets go forward from here representing Guam and the CNMI in all that they do," said Lt. Col. Thomas Anderson, the professor of military science at the University of Guam. "Their families have every right to be very proud of what they have accomplished, and I am most excited for the Army soldiers who will now have these new, motivated second lieutenants to lead them."

UOG's ROTC program was established in October 1979 and is celebrating 40 years of producing dynamic leaders for Guam, the Pacific, and the United States. ***(PR)***

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By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Teresita A. Santos (Ind-Rota) has expressed concern as to why payments for new or renewed poker units on Rota are being collected on Saipan.

Santos said these payments made by the poker operators on Rota should be deposited into a designated business unit account assigned for appropriation by the Rota Legislative Delegation.

The senator visited the Office of Revenue and Taxation on Saipan yesterday morning to follow up on the matter and said she was informed that a review of the Rev&Tax records of payment has been conducted and forwarded to Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig.

"I'm still waiting for the findings of the report or a response from the Secretary of Finance as of today," she said.

In a recent letter to Atalig, the senator said she hopes that such payments are not erroneously deposited into the business unit account appropriated by the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation since the payments are collected on Saipan. Santos requested Atalig for detailed report of all poker fee collection from January through December 2020. The senator also asked Atalig for the total number of poker units that have been paid to operate on Rota on a monthly basis from January through December 2020 and total monies collected on a monthly basis for these units, if any.

Santos

She said she just recently learned about this collection on Saipan from a Rota staff of Rev&Tax.

She pointed out that all funds collected from poker establishments on Rota are categorized as local funds for the First Senatorial District (Rota).

"As such, upon certification of the availability of these funds by your office, it is under the legislative authority of the Rota Legislative Delegation to appropriate such funds for the benefit of the people on Rota," Santos told Atalig in the letter.

The senator said that, with the limited source of revenue, every cent counts in identifying critical funding for the safety and wellbeing of the Rota community during these trying times.

Therefore, Santos said, it is critical that all funds paid with the intent of conducting business on Rota, although paid on Saipan, should be properly deposited into the assigned business unit account for appropriation by the Rota Legislative Delegation.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Division
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net | Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

NOTICE OF PROGRAM AVAILABILITY
Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) – Housing Programs

The Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) wishes to announce the availability of the CDBG-DR Housing Programs. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has allocated the CNMI a total of $243,946,000 to aid in the recovery of Typhoon Mangkhut and Super Typhoon Yutu. $113,362,000 of the total amount is allocated to Housing Programs.

Eligibility Criteria
- Must be a U.S. Citizen, a U.S. National, or a qualified alien;
- Must be a resident of the CNMI for at least three (3) years;
- Gross annual household income, according to size of household, must not exceed 120% of median income.
- Must provide proof of ownership such as fee simple title or leasehold interest of the property and not located in a floodplain.

Information on the CDBG-DR Housing Programs
- Elderly and/or disabled applicants who were displaced by the storms are prioritized. However, eligible applicants that are mortgage ready will be prioritized on a first come, first serve basis over the elderly and/or disabled applicants who are not mortgage ready.
- Type of Financial Assistance:
  - Deferred Loans
  - Non-Interest (zero-interest) Bearing Loans
- **Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program** loan amount: $10,000 up to the maximum HOME per-unit subsidy limits that apply to the CNMI as determined by HUD.
- **Homebuyer Program** loan amount: $1,000 to $250,000.

Application Steps
- Starting December 18, 2020, Pre-qualification applications and checklist are available for pick up at the CDBG-DR Office and the NMHC Offices on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota or print an application made available on the NMHC and CDBG-DR websites at www.nmhcgov.net and www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.
- Completed pre-qualification applications and interviews will be conducted starting January 4, 2021 at the NMHC Main Office in Garapan, Saipan, NMHC Tinian Field Office (NMC Campus), and the Sinapalo Youth Center on Rota, Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM except Holidays.
- Once the pre-application is completed and submitted, the case workers will assess the pre-qualification application and determine whether the applicant is eligible for the programs(s). If the applicant is eligible, the case worker will schedule an appointment with the applicant. If an applicant is deemed ineligible, a notification will be sent to the applicant.
- The case worker will inform the eligible applicant of the next steps once the application process has been completed.

Should you have any questions or need special accommodations, please contact the CDBG-DR office at 233-9447.

NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency"

Mobil donates $1K to Ohala Foundation

Mobil Oil Mariana Islands Inc. recently donated $1,000 to the Tinian-based Ohala Foundation to help fund the foundation's services and programs.

"We are very thankful for Mobil Mariana's $1,000 donation, which will allow the Ohala Foodbank to distribute more food to families on Tinian," said foundation chair Phillip M. Long. The Ohala Foundation recognizes that these are not easy times for our people and this additional funding, from community-minded companies such as Mobil Marianas, will go toward supporting families as they struggle to deal with new economic challenges. We look forward to a long-lasting relationship with Mobil Marianas as they understand the time is now to support our most vulnerable in our communities."

Mobil Oil Mariana Islands is a subsidiary of Exxon Mobil Corp., the world's largest publicly traded international oil and gas company. ExxonMobil has been a member of the CNMI business community for 50 years. Mobil Oil Marina Islands is a major supplier of petroleum products, with a large customer service base in the CNMI. Mobil Oil Marianas Islands also supplies to the wider region of Pacific Islands, including the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau via distributors.

In Guam, Mobil Oil Mariana Islands gives annual contributions and sponsorships to the American Cancer Society, American Red Cross, Guam Chamber of Commerce, and public and private schools (in support of a reading, math and science programs across the Marianas). They also support numerous outreach, safety, environmental, community programs and now the Ohala Foundation on Tinian.

For more information on how to donate, volunteer or avail of services please visit www.ohalafoundation.org or call 670-433-2664. ***(PR)***

HELP PROTECT SEA TURTLES
Sea turtles are protected under federal and CNMI laws. It is illegal to harass, kill, capture, or collect turtles and their eggs. Sea turtles are important for the environment and they help beautify the islands.
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DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES CNMI
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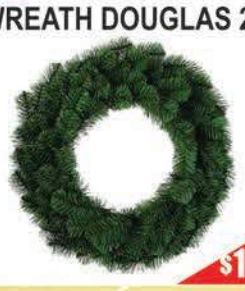
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Saturday, December 19 to Friday, December 25, 2020

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JOETEN BUTANE GAS 4pk

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CLOROX BLEACH CONC 121z

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House passes bill that prohibits use of Styrofoam containers

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of the Representatives passed Tuesday a bill that will prohibit the use in the CNMI of disposable food service containers made of expanded polystyrene or EPS—more commonly known as Styrofoam.

Of the 19 representatives present at the session, Rep. Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) voted "no" to the passage of House Bill 21-89. Rep. Joseph Leepan T. Guerrero (R-Saipan) was absent but excused from the session.

The bill, introduced by Rep. Ivan A. Blanco (R-Saipan) in November 2019, will now go to the Senate for action.

Blanco told *Saipan Tribune* Wednesday that the bill's passage is a small step in their effort to curb imported materials that are harmful to people's health and the ecosystem. Blanco also hopes this legislation sparks the entrepreneurial spirit for business-minded individuals to manufacture food and drink containers from local and readily available natural resources.

Blanco stated in the bill that styrene in Styrofoam is made from petroleum-based non-biodegradable foam that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and International Agency for Research on Cancer consider a "possible human carcinogen" and "that such materials can have serious impacts upon human health, wildlife, and aquatic environment, and the economy."

Blanco said polystyrene is a type of plastic that includes Styrofoam and is expensive to recycle and is not biodegradable, and has been shown to leach harmful chemical into food and beverages.

He said the CNMI has no economically feasible means of recycling polystyrene foam locally, thus a majority of used polystyrene foam end up in the landfill.

The lawmaker said expanded polystyrene is a common environmental pollutant that poses a risk to the fragile ecological balance, since marine and land wildlife perish as a result of ingesting polystyrene products. "This risk can occur over and over again since expanded polystyrene remains in the ecosystem for a very long time," he said.

Blanco pointed out that it's in the best interest of the health, safety, and welfare of the people that regulations prohibit the use of certain expanded polystyrene food service products and disposable food service ware to reduce the cost of solid waste disposal; to protect the environment and ecosystems, and wildlife and marine life.

The bill will prohibit the use of Styrofoam food containers beginning Jan. 1, 2022, to allow food establishments to exhaust their inventory and to seek environmentally safer disposable food service containers that include service ware for take-out foods, packaged meat, eggs, bakery products, and leftovers from partially consumed meals prepared by food vendors.

The bill excludes polystyrene foam coolers or ice chests that are used for the processing or shipping of seafood and "emergency use." The other exemption is food or beverages that come prepackaged with Styrofoam at wholesale.

A civil fine of not more than $100 may be imposed for violation. Under the legislation, the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, Division of Environmental Quality may promulgate rules and regulations to implement the law.

Rip currents seen until Tuesday

The public is being warned of high risk of rip currents through Tuesday afternoon.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, dangerous and frequent rip currents expected along east facing reefs of Guam, Rota, Tinian, and Saipan.

Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water. The public is advised to avoid venturing out near reef lines facing east. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don`t swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH CASINO COMMISSION
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
P.O. Box 500237, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: 1 (670) 233-1857 • Fax: 1 (670) 233-1856
www.cnmicasinocommission.com
Email: info@cnmicasinocommission.com

AGENDA

December 22, 2020

Pursuant to the Open Government Act, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Commonwealth Casino Commission ("Commission"), hereby give notice that the Commission has scheduled its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, December 22, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. at the Commission's 2nd Floor Main Conference Room at the Springs Plaza in Gualo Rai, Saipan. However, pursuant to Governor Torres' Executive Orders and Directives on the ongoing threat from the Covid-19 pandemic and the limited space available, access to the Commission's meeting will also be available via videoconference.

The following Agenda will be discussed:

I. PRELIMINARIES:

A. Call to Order
B. Roll Call
C. Adoption of Agenda
D. Adoption of Minutes. November 24, 2020

II. REPORTS:

A. Report by the Chairman
B. Report by the Acting Executive Director

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

IV. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS:

A. Casino Licensee — Imperial Pacific International (CNMI), LLC ("IPI") — Updates:
   1. Imperial Pacific Resort & Hotel ("IPR"). Update on the construction project
   2. IPI Personnel:
      a) Organizational Chart Update
      b) Resident Employment Objectives
      c) Status of Employee Payroll & Employee Housing
   3. IPI Financial Matters.
      a) Annual Casino License Fee
      b) Annual Casino Regulatory Fee
B. Other Miscellaneous Matters

V. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Update on House Bill No. 21-11, HS1, SD1, SD3.
B. Commission's Response to Public Comments Concerning Proposed Amendments to CCC Regulations Published in the Commonwealth Register, Volume 42, Number 10 at 447 – 044275 on October 28, 2020.
C. Adoption of CCC Permanent Regulations.
D. Appointment of the CCC Executive Director position.
E. Other Old Business Matters.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Update on the Covid-19 Pandemic – Availability of Vaccine
B. Other New Business

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A. Consult with the Legal Counsel
B. Report by the CCC Audit and Compliance Division
C. CCC Personnel Matters

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The Commission reserves the right to amend this Agenda and take action on the amended Agenda pursuant to 1 CMC §9910 (b). Pursuant to 1 CMC §9912 (a)(7) and 1 CMC §9912 (c), the Commission may vote to meet in Executive Session. In addition, the Commission may extend its official meeting for another day or more, if necessary. For those interested in joining or attending the meeting via the video conference, please contact the Commission at info@cnmicasinocommission.com for instructions on how to log-in to the conference site.

/s/ Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero
Chairman

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
Main Office: FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 501055, SAIPAN MP 96950-1055
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax (670) 234-5962
E-mail Address: cpa.admin@pticom.com • Website: www.cnmiports.com

ARFF TRAINING FACILITY TYPHOON DAMAGES GENERAL REPAIRS/REPLACEMENT
Project No. CPA-SA-001-19

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is soliciting proposals for general repairs and/or replacement of typhoon damages sustained by Super Typhoon Yutu at the ARFF Training Facility (ARFFTF) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport as per this Scope of Work (SOW) and associated Contract Documents, meeting all current federal, state and local government agencies' rules and regulations.

The Scope of Work (SOW) outlining the project's general requirements may be picked up at the CPA Administration Office at no cost. Project approach and costs must be within the parameters of the established SOW. Any deviation from the SOW, a proposal based on reduced SOW or a proposal that exceeded what is required by the SOW, may be grounds for immediate disqualification of the offeror's proposal package.

A pre-proposal conference will be held on Friday, January 15, 2021 at 10:00 am at the ARFF Training Facility at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport to discuss the project scope of work in detail. Attendance to the pre-proposal conference is mandatory. A site inspection will immediately follow the pre-proposal conference. Additional site visits after the pre-proposal conference may be coordinated with CPA's Project Manager, Mr. Andrew Ellison, at telephone number 671-689-1262 or 670-288-0907 or Ms. Wendi Prater, CPA Executive Assistant/Project Manager, at 670-237-6519, but only until January 22, 2021.

Questions shall be submitted in writing to Ms. Prater, via hand delivery to CPA, or via email to wprater@cnmiports.com by no later than 5:00 p.m., Friday, January 22, 2021. Responses to questions or requests for information will be provided to all proposers who attend the mandatory pre-proposal conference.

Proposers shall submit one (1) original and four (4) copies of the proposals, sealed in an envelope and marked on the cover package outside as follows: **"Proposal for General Construction Repairs/Replacement for SIA ARFF Training Facility, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, CPA-SA-001-19"**. Proposals must be submitted by no later than **5:00 P.M. CHST, FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021**, to the Office of the Executive Director at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. All proposals shall become property of the Commonwealth Ports Authority.

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

/s/ CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO Date: December 17, 2020
Executive Director

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP21-CHCC/CGC-HT/PH-MCHB-001
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: DECEMBER 23, 2020 TIME:10:00AM (CHST)

"OFFICE LEASE - TINIAN"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.GOV.MP]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
P. O. Box 501304, Saipan MP 96950 | Gualo Rai Center, Saipan
TEL. NO. 664-8300 | FAX NO. 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

NOTICE OF APPLICATION

As of December 18, 2020

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1. Office of Representative Jose I. Itibus, 21st House of Representatives	12/09/2020 SSm-2021-007	Construction of Two Beach Pala Pala Structures	Garapan, Saipan	Shoreline	Under Review*
2. Triple J Saipan Inc.	12/17/2020 SSCH-2021-008	Triple J Corporate Building	Beach Road, Saipan	Shoreline & Coastal Hazard	Under Review*
3. Success International Corporation	05/19/2020 SMS-2020-X-048	New Hope Quarry Operation	As Matuis, Saipan	Major Siting	Final Determination
4. Department of Public Works	10/23/2020 SMS-2016-X-088	Phase I & II, Route 33 Beach Road Improvements	Beach Road, Saipan	Major Siting	Final Determination
5. P&A Corporation	10/30/2020 SMS-96-X-020-A1	Winners Commercial Facilities	Afetnas, Saipan	Major Siting	Final Determination

NMIAC §15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sitings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.

MCS, Kensington tie up for Holiday Coupon Fundraiser

A Mount Carmel School student holds up Kensington Hotel Saipan's holiday coupons as MCS promotes its Holiday Coupon Fundraiser. MCS

To raise funds and spread the Christmas spirit, Kensington Hotel Saipan is offering special discounts for Mount Carmel School's Holiday Coupon Fundraiser. By purchasing a holiday coupon booklet, participants can save 20% off at Loria Restaurant, 20% off an Ohas cake, and 10% off a Kensington Hotel Room Package.

The fundraiser involves a complete booklet of holiday coupons from local establishments that provide families with discounts for this holiday season while also drawing customers to local businesses.

Funds raised by this program will be directly invested in Mount Carmel School's academic programs and services, COVID-19 mitigation resources, and infrastructural improvements as the school aims to increase more face-to-face classes by its second semester.

Only 200 booklets are available for purchase and can be bought at the MCS Business Office from Monday to Friday between 7am and 4pm.

The $50 holiday coupon booklet contains a total of 35 coupons with discounts from partners like Bubba Gump, Couples Cakery, Fishing Tackle, Great Harvest, Herman's Modern Bakery, Hong Ye Hardware, IT&E, Kensington Resort, Kiki's, McDonald's Saipan, MiscKnicKnacks, Natural Nail Spa, Pao Pao, Surf Club Restaurant, T Bar, The Shack, Tribe Marianas, and Triple J Motors. Participants of the fundraiser can save over $200 this holiday season through the discounts alone.

For more information about Mount Carmel School's Holiday Coupon Fundraiser, visit www.mountcarmelsaipan.com. ***(PR)***

Eco Camp starts Monday

Christmas Eco Camp will run at the Marianas Trekking Adventure Center in Marpi beginning Dec. 21. Camp will be held in one week sessions over the holiday period.

Eco Camp is designed for kids between the ages of 6 and 14. Camp activities include hiking, snorkeling, kayaking, go-karting, field trips, off-roading, arts and crafts, golf driving range, and slideshow creation.

"This will be our 21st year offering activities to our local community," said Marianas Trekking manager Jojo Valencia. "We are going to go on some great hikes and field trips along with our traditional activities. It should be a really fun experience for kids."

Reservations can be made in person at the Marianas Trekking Adventure Center or by calling 323-8735, or at marianastrekking.com.

People are encouraged to sign up at marianastrekking.com. Camp participation is limited. Camp is priced at $80 per week, (Dec. 21-24 and Dec. 28-31), and camp runs from 8am to 12pm. ***(PR)***

One of 3 in ice case sentenced today

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

One of three individuals allegedly involved in smuggling methamphetamine or "ice" through the U.S. Postal Service will be sentenced today, Friday, after she admitted to the crime.

Elaine Francisco Demei is set to appear before U.S District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona Manglona at 9am today for her sentencing.

During her change of plea hearing, Demei admitted to picking up with co-defendants Vince Koki Leon Guerrero and Evelyn Chong Tydingco a package at the post office that contained methamphetamine or "ice" that had been sent from California.

Leon Guerrero and Tydingco recently had a tear-filled sentencing two weeks ago, with the court imposing on the two a sentence of 10 years each that will set them apart that long from each other and their 1-year-old son.

Tydingco was sentenced to one of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' facilities in Seattle, Washington. Leon Guerrero was sentenced to a facility where he can learn trade skills.

According to court documents, the package that Demei, Tydingco, and Leon Guerrero picked up was addressed to "Debbie Lee," a false identity, and was sent to the post office in San Vicente.

The package contained methamphetamine with a net weight of 110.03 grams and with an approximate purity level of 100%, one of the largest amounts seen in the CNMI, according to Manglona.

According to Demei, she and Tydingco arranged for the package to be shipped to Demei's private mailbox under a false identity because Tydingco was hesitant to use her own private mailbox because her family members could easily access it and obtain the package. The two constantly checked the post office in anticipation of the package's arrival. After several visits, Demei gave her contact information to the post office so that she would be contacted once the package arrived.

After Demei received a call from the post office, she informed Tydingco, who informed Leon Guerrero, then the three proceeded to the post office to pick up the package. After picking up the package, Demei said she handed it to Tydingco who handed it to Leon Guerrero, who opened the package, setting off a tracking device.

While driving, Demei said that she noticed a car was tailing them, so she proceeded to make random turns. She said Tydingco told her to stop the vehicle at the nearest trash can, but they were pulled over by authorities, arrested, and questioned.

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950
Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com
Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
MEMBER
The Associated Press
Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Eviction is the New Year's gift that no one deserves but millions could get

Millions of households nationwide could find themselves evicted from their homes soon after New Year's Day as one of the last safeguards from eviction during the pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention nationwide eviction moratorium, is set to expire.

In September, the CDC issued an order halting all evictions nationwide. The order was significant, and explicit about the importance of preventing evictions during a pandemic. Keeping people in their homes can ensure a space for quarantining, enhance their ability to comply with stay-at-home orders, and reduce pressure on homeless shelters.

The timing of the order's expiration couldn't be worse. New cases and deaths have reached an all time high as the nationwide death toll surpasses 300,000. If an eviction moratorium is an "effective public health measure," as the CDC clearly states, the United States needs it now more than ever.

As the pandemic has gotten worse, so has the financial situation of many households. According to one estimate, 12 million renter households will owe an average of $5,000 in rent by the end of the year. A Census Bureau survey estimates that nearly 400,000 adults in Pennsylvania are either behind on rent or mortgages or have no confidence that they'll be able to make payments in the coming weeks.

Black and Hispanic families with children, particularly those headed by a single woman, are at the highest risk of eviction.

It's not that tenants aren't trying to pay. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia found a 70% increase in the number of people paying rent on a credit card—setting the stage for a future crisis in personal debt.

In Philadelphia, City Council failed to renew an eviction moratorium despite extending other critical measures, such as the Eviction Diversion Program. Gov. Tom Wolf claims he exhausted his ability to impose a moratorium. The Philadelphia Municipal Courts stepped in and halted the execution of evictions. That order also expires on Dec. 31.

The CDC's ban on evictions does have loopholes, and it hasn't stopped some people from losing their homes. But moratoriums make a difference. An analysis by Princeton's Eviction Lab found that the number of eviction filings in cities increased after a moratorium was lifted. This board's analysis of residential eviction filings in Philadelphia Municipal Court found that this fall, under the CDC moratorium, there were about 55 fewer daily filings compared with the months before the pandemic.

A study helmed by Kathryn Leifheit of UCLA found that states that allowed moratoriums to expire earlier experi-

See EVICTION on Next Page

Ban Trump from Twitter... and keep Biden in the White House basement for the next four years so we don't have to hear his gaffes!
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Holiday shopping for America's political leaders

By ANN MCFEATTERS
Tribune News Service

Ann McFeatters is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service*. Readers may send her email at amcfeatters@nationalpress.com.*

The winter avalanche has arrived. All those holiday catalog vying for space with bills in our mailboxes.

Thus, it is time to put grievances aside and do our annual virtual shopping for the politicians who have failed us so abysmally this year. And a few who have even done their jobs.

Consider poor Mike Pence. Standing patiently all these years slightly behind Donald Trump while waiting to run for president himself in 2024. And now! Trump threatens to run again! Pence has become the invisible man.

So we think Pence should receive the World's Smallest Voice Changer. Sold by the Spilsbury catalogue for only $12.99, "you say your favorite phrases in riotous new ways." Such as "I'd like to thank the president on behalf of all the people of the world for being the most remarkable, handsome, visionary on the planet." "Isn't that right, boss."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who almost single handedly upheld the Democratic Party for four years, is adept at moving about in the Emerald City of Oz. She should be good at handling Plow and Hearth's $16.95 Flingshot Flying Monkeys. "Slip your fingertips into their little mitts, pull back like a slingshot, let fly and listen as they screech through the air." Said Patricia, "Hilarious. I believe the adults had more fun than the kids."

And how about that William Barr, the most sycophantic attorney general in U.S. history. Lost his straight-shooter reputation. Did Trump's bidding to the nth degree day and night. And then he says one thing – there is no evidence of fraud that would change the election results—and he's on the outs!

Barr needs a new outlet that does not involve interacting with people such as Trump supporters disappointed with him and everyone else who thinks he sold his soul. Sharper Image has a Jellyfish Aquarium for $99.99 that "showcases three lifelike rubber jellyfish that float and sway in a mesmerizing fashion. Toggle through five different color modes for a relaxing, eye-catching experience." Might keep Barr out of trouble for a while. Or not.

Vice President-elect Kamala Harris plans on changing the world. To help her get started, she needs the Heifer International catalogue's Gift Ark for $5,000. It provides families with needed animals, including two cows, two sheep, two oxen, two water buffalo, two pigs, two beehives, two goats, a community animal vet kit, two trios of ducks, two trios of rabbits, two trios of guinea pigs, two flocks of geese, two flock of chicks, two alpacas and two schools of fish. Truly a gift that keeps on giving in so many ways.

Personal presidential lawyer Rudy Giuliani needs help. He mightily embarrassed himself when attacking the legitimacy of the most secure and fair election in U.S. history while his hair dye dribbled down his face. This after a press conference at a lawn care warehouse between a crematorium and a porn store.

In lieu of a lifetime supply of voice-muzzling masks, he should receive Sharper Image's 10X lighted folding travel mirror so perfectly portable "you won't need your glasses to get a great view." It never needs charging and folds flat for your pocket.

Washington's most powerful man, decade after decade, has been Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell who has labored mightily to produce … nothing other than tax cuts for the wealthy and judges passionately interested in what goes on in our bedrooms.

We have selected for him Hammacher Schlemmer's $69.95 indoor flameless electric marshmallow roaster. Chocolate, graham crackers, marshmallows not included. Absolutely pointless, much like McConnell.

We can all agree the most daunting job in 2021 is going to be Joe Biden's. We toyed with an automatic machine that throws balls to dogs, which might keep the incoming president from getting more hairline foot fractures.

But we are going with a collection of T-shirts from Bits and Pieces, for $17.99 each. These include: "The Sermonator." "Let's assume I'm right. It'll save time." "I may be wrong, but it's highly unlikely." "Don't worry. I can fix it." "I can explain it to you, but I can't understand for you." "Just be happy I'm not a twin."

As for multimillionaire siblings and White House advisers Ivanka, Eric, Donald Jr. and Jared Kushner? Without Demanding Daddy just down the hall, we propose a $179.99 "lifelike interactive pet" from Sharper Image for the Trump kids. "The cute and cuddly companion for older adults … without the care or feeding of a real pet." But actually? Anything other than all-purpose pardons.

The power of vaccines against a pandemic: same story, new chapter

By DR. SARA 'SALLY' H. GOZA
American Academy of Pediatrics

Dr. Sara "Sally" H. Goza is the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Polio no longer stalks children in this country, but in the early 1950s, outbreaks caused more than 15,000 cases of paralysis each year. Until smallpox officially was declared eradicated around the globe in 1980, the devastating disease wiped out about 3 of every 10 people who contracted it. Major epidemics of measles once caused an estimated 2.6 million deaths each year, but between 2000 and 2018, the world witnessed a 73% drop in measles deaths worldwide, the World Health Organization estimates.

There is one reason for all of this: vaccines.

The CDC estimates that for children born in the U.S. from 1994 to 2013, vaccinations will prevent about 322 million illnesses, 21 million hospitalizations, and 732,000 deaths over their lifetimes.

The new COVID-19 vaccine provides hope.

After approval from the FDA and the CDC, the first known coronavirus vaccination in the United States happened Monday morning in New York City, state officials said -- a powerful weapon in the fight against a pandemic that to date has left 300,000 people dead in the U.S.

It is appropriate that a nurse at a medical center was the first to receive a shot, outside of a vaccine trial. Our medical professionals have endured months of exhausting shifts at hospitals and medical centers, separation from their families, the stress of treating seriously ill and dying patients, the fear of contracting a deadly virus, and the misinformation spread by skeptics who refuse to wear masks and who shun advice to stay away from others.

As a pediatrician, I believe in vaccines. I know vaccines save lives. That's why we recommend all children and teens receive immunizations to prevent diseases like measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis, polio, influenza, and HPV – saving them from serious illnesses and death. We look forward to when a COVID-19 vaccine will be available to children of all ages, once the research is complete.

In pediatric offices, we spend a lot of time talking about immunizations, including helping parents understand the science that proves vaccines are safe and effective. Sadly, we've seen how quickly wrong information can spread online, leading parents to delay or decline vaccines. Recently, this played out in measles outbreaks that infected hundreds in the U.S.

The COVID-19 vaccine is the same. It will only work if people agree to get their shot.

As the vaccine becomes more available, more physicians, of all specialties, will need to have these important conversations with their patients. We will have to explain that the science behind this vaccine is sound and followed a rigorous process.

We can share with patients that the vaccine is very effective; the 95% effectiveness demonstrated by Pfizer's vaccine rivals some of our most successful vaccines. And the side effects are also similar to other, well-known vaccines. These are mostly mild or moderate symptoms like a sore arm, fatigue or fever. But it's far safer and better than getting the disease itself, which can cause severe complications and death even in otherwise healthy people.

We can reassure patients that we will continue to monitor the vaccine as it is rolled out across the country. The U.S. has a robust vaccine safety monitoring system that has been in place and operating behind the scenes for decades. This system has enough power to detect any real problems.

We also know the vaccine will not miraculously make COVID-19 go away and protect everyone immediately.

It's been a long, frustrating year, but we can't take our foot off the gas just yet. The end of the road is now, finally, in sight. How long it stretches out before us will depend on how well everyone in the U.S. manages the next few months. We must continue to avoid crowds, wear masks, wash our hands.

And, we now can add: Get the vaccine when it becomes available to you.

Official Score: 306 to 232. Biden! victory!

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY 'PEPE BATBON' CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey aka Pepe Batbon is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.

In the 2016 election POTUS 45 called the electoral college's 306 votes for him "a landslide. Four years later...

AG Bulldog Bill Barr Bolts

AG Bulldog Bill Barr fired? on12/14/2020, he bolts
resigns after hearing 45's comments and bad signs
as a sad depressed stallion bites the ass of some colts
Barr avoids dealing with upcoming lawsuits and fines

Attorney General Barr, after Pence, was the No.2 flunkee
who finally said he had found no signs of voting fraud
sounding less elephantine but more a democratic donkey
ending his term in office professionally seriously flawed

Out the door he goes and he sure won't be coming back
his firing or removal by POTUS 45 has been expected
while in Wash. D.C. 'alternate electors' start a new track
they don't believe, can't accept, POTUS 45 was rejected

Remember that Bill Barr was Trump's AG number three
three strikes and you're out, no doubt, and not home free.

EVICTION

From Page 10

enced faster growth in coronavirus cases and deaths.

As the first Americans get the coronavirus vaccine, the end to this pandemic may be in sight. The question is how many people will survive the winter to get the vaccine. A critical part of the final push is maintaining people in their homes. The CDC must extend the order halting evictions—and Congress needs to step up and provide critical financial relief to tenants, landlords, and homeowners. An eviction avalanche leading to a surge in coronavirus and homelessness starting on New Year's Day is no way to set 2021 as a year of recovery.

(c) 2020 *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Don't want to tell your customers to mask up? Try using artificial intelligence

By JON HEALEY
Los Angeles Times

Jon Healey is the Los Angeles Times' *deputy editorial page editor.*

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, plenty of evidence has emerged that wearing face masks cuts down on disease transmission and saves lives. Yet even in cities and states that have mandated mask use, compliance in the United States has been ... unenthusiastic. And good luck finding a law enforcement officer eager to enforce those mandates.

So here's an idea: Why not enlist the help of artificial intelligence to nudge people to mask up?

The Seattle software company RealNetworks has developed an app and data platform that aims to promote mask use and address the safety concerns of businesses, governments and other organizations. Launching today, the app—dubbed MaskCheck—uses AI and a tablet's camera to detect whether a passer-by is not wearing a mask or wearing one improperly (in particular, by covering the mouth but leaving the nose free to inhale and exhale virus-laden air).

The company is offering the software for free in partnership with the COVID-19 International Research Team, a grass-roots effort by scientists around the world to advance efforts to defeat the pandemic.

In its simplest deployment, the app could be used on kiosks in foyers to check mask usage and alert people when they're not wearing one properly (or at all), while also showing them the right way to cover their faces. Or it could silently gather data on compliance that could help inform policymakers—for example, in determining whether a mask mandate could enable certain businesses and activities to reopen safely.

For those of us frustrated by the stubborn resistance to face coverings in this country, MaskCheck seems like a good way to prod people to put up with a minor inconvenience in the name of public health. And a flat screen on a pedestal at an entrance or in a hallway can deliver the message without provoking a deadly confrontation, an outcome that seems ludicrous yet has been all too real.

The software is trying to address a problem that extends in multiple directions. The people who are concerned about contracting COVID-19 are avoiding places where they're likely to share spaced with unmasked strangers. Business owners and employees may let customers go maskless for fear of alienating them or provoking a fight. And with little more than anecdotal evidence about mask compliance, policymakers draw up pandemic countermeasures based on assumptions about risk that may not be true.

"I think we'll make better policy decisions if we have more data," said Rob Glaser, chief executive of RealNetworks. The company plans to make anonymized, aggregated data collected by the MaskCheck app freely available, so researchers and policymakers can see how well mask mandates are or are not working.

For example, Glaser asked, "what if a bowling alley could demonstrate 100% compliance with mask wearing? Why shouldn't people be allowed to bowl there?" (Bowling comes to mind often for Glaser, a former investor in the Professional Bowlers Association.)

One early deployment illustrates how MaskCheck might help on several of those fronts. At Seattle's Bush School, a private K-12 school that is still conducting in-person classes, MaskCheck kiosks in hallways around the campus check whether students and staff are properly wearing masks. The point is to offer some reassurance to parents and teachers that compliance is high and it's safe to be there.

RealNetworks may be best known for its RealAudio technology, which gave rise to the streaming media industry in the 1990s. But MaskCheck grew out of the company's work on facial recognition technology, which is just a wee bit more controversial than webcasting and online music services.

Reza Rassool, RealNetworks' chief technologist, emphasized that MaskCheck's artificial intelligence isn't a facial recognition program. It does not identify people, it just detects the presence of a human face and the position of a mask, if one is being worn. If the person using the app chooses, though, it can estimate the age and gender of each person observed, and it can capture their images, Rassool said.

Age and gender might be useful in helping policymakers get a demographic breakdown on mask compliance. But there's a trade-off to this utility; the more information the app captures and records, the more it raises the sort of surveillance-state hackles that facial recognition programs do.

The problem with mask mandates today is mainly a political one—a sense by many Americans that the government shouldn't have the power to force them to breathe filtered air. Despite estimates that universal mask use could save tens of thousands of lives, roughly half the population goes out in public without one, and there's little effort to force a change.

Glaser said a MaskCheck kiosk could act like one of those electronic street signs that tell you have fast you're going—and flash at you when you're speeding. "The data shows when those signs are there, people go closer to the speed limit than when they weren't there," he said.

It's easy to imagine the app being deployed in more aggressive ways—for example, tied electronically to a door lock to prevent unmasked people from entering a building. But RealNetworks isn't going in that direction now. It's counting on its partnership with the COVID-19 International Research Team to spread the app organically to institutions, governments and businesses across the country in an effort to generate more mask wearing voluntarily.

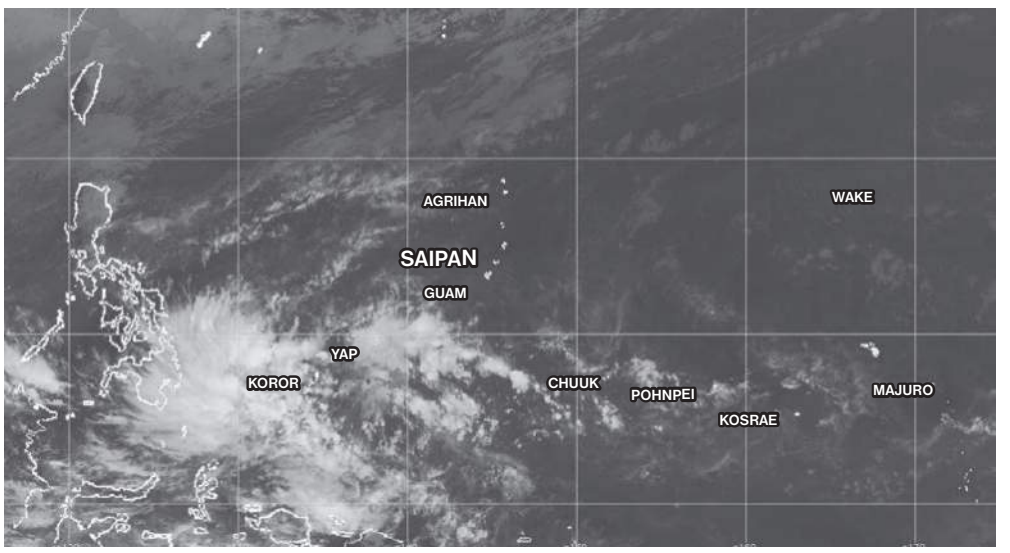
Said COV-IRT cofounder Afshin Beheshti, a bioinformatician in Silicon Valley, "We're not going to shame people to wear masks. We're going to try to educate them with these tools."

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers.
86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:06 AM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2020

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam weather radar shows isolated showers moving through the Marianas waters, with scattered showers to the west moving away. Satellite shows a cluster of showers with a few thunderstorms to the east moving toward the islands, still outside of radar range. The buoys reveal combined seas of 6 to 8 feet, made up of a north swell, an east swell, and wind waves.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❏ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❏ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❏ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❏ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	87° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	86° / 78°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	87° / 80°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	87° / 78°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	87° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Saturday	6:37 AM	5:50 PM
Sunday	6:37 AM	5:51 PM
Monday	6:38 AM	5:51 PM
Tuesday	6:38 AM	5:52 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	9:47 AM	9:23 PM	-
Saturday	10:35 AM	10:19 PM	-
Sunday	11:18 AM	11:10 PM	-
Monday	11:56 AM	11:59 PM	-
Tuesday	12:32 PM	-	-

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Thunderstorms	70° / 61°
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	36° / 16°
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	70° / 63°
Honolulu	Windy	79° / 71°
London	Partly Cloudy	39° / 34°
Los Angeles	Sunny	74° / 50°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	88° / 77°
Melbourne	Rain	72° / 57°
Miami	Cloudy	77° / 73°
New York	Partly Cloudy	41° / 37°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	48° / 39°
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	37° / 27°
Busan	Sunny	45° / 28°
Rome	Showers	54° / 46°
Salem	Cloudy	58° / 50°
San Francisco	Sunny	58° / 46°
Seoul	Sunny	32° / 12°
Tokyo	Sunny	50° / 36°
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	45° / 36°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:08 AM	LOW TIDE	-0.67
11:29 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.74
5:01 PM	LOW TIDE	1.08
9:19 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.58

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2020

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 4, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	3, 5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	1, 3, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 8, 2020

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Wed/Fri

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1212	18:00	18:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

MARK RABAGO
Perfect Image Beauty Salon & General Merchandise is located at the USL Building in Gualo Rai along Middle Road across J's Restaurant.

MARK RABAGO
Perfect Image Beauty Salon & General Merchandise owner Michelle Caleon, center, with beauty experts Anne Macauyam, left, and Larra Caleon.

MARK RABAGO
Perfect Image Beauty Salon & General Merchandise has in stock Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Aeropostale, Ralph Lauren, and various brands for women's dresses all from the U.S.

Up to 70% off in Perfect Image holiday sale

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A boutique that also doubles as a beauty salon is pulling out all the stops this holiday season with a Christmas sale of up to 70% off on merchandise.

Perfect Image Beauty Salon & General Merchandise owner Michelle Caleon said this Christmas sale is only for this weekend, Dec. 19 and 20, from 10am to 7pm.

"It's our own small way or saying 'thank you' to our loyal customers, that even though there's a pandemic, they continue to patronize our store and salon," she said.

Just some of the name brands Perfect Image has in stock are Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Aeropostale, Ralph Lauren, and various brands for women's dresses all from the U.S. They also sell other clothing accessories, signature bags, wallets, and belts.

Caleon said she opened Perfect Image in July 2017 because she wanted to become a small business owner. And to be unique, she opted to open a boutique and a salon in one establishment. "We wanted the local community to have a new place where they can pamper themselves in a beauty salon and, at the same time, shop or check around for clothes or what not."

Like a majority of businesses on island, Perfect Image was forced to shut down last March due to COVID-19 concerns. "COVID-19 really affected our business. When we had our first positive case in March 2020 we closed our business right away because we got scared. Then we only opened again last May 15, but still business was very slow because I guess at that time people were still scared to go out and might get the virus. But right now business is slowly picking up compared to previous months," said Caleon.

Aside from business being very slow, the financial challenges still remain. "Our rental fee is still the same and paying other expenses such as sanitizer, alcohol, disinfectant wipes, and spray will now add to this because we have to sanitize after servicing each customer [on the salon side]," said Caleon.

On that breath, she assures that Perfect Image complies with all the guidelines of the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force. "We're strictly implementing the 'no mask, no entry' policy and we also have a login sheet for our customer that are coming in and we do check their temperature."

Caleon said she's just happy that Perfect Image has reopened again and serving the community's needs, whether it be for clothes or for pampering in their beauty salon. "As always to all our customers, we are very grateful for the pleasure of serving you. It's always our desire to keep you satisfied with our service and products. Thank you so much for your patronage and always trusting us."

Perfect Image Beauty Salon & General Merchandise is located at the USL Building in Gualo Rai along Middle Road across J's Restaurant. For more information or to book an appointment to its salon, call 234-3215 and 285-3215.

Deal near on COVID-19 economic aid bill

WASHINGTON (AP)— Congressional negotiators closed in Wednesday on a $900 billion COVID-19 economic relief package that would deliver additional help to businesses, $300 per week jobless checks, and $600 stimulus payments to most Americans. But there was no deal quite yet.

The long-delayed measure was coming together as Capitol Hill combatants finally fashioned difficult compromises, often at the expense of more ambitious Democratic wishes for the legislation, to complete the second major relief package of the pandemic.

A hoped-for announcement Wednesday failed to materialize as lawmakers across the spectrum hammered out details of the sprawling legislation and top negotiators continued to trade offers. But lawmakers briefed on the outlines of the aid bill freely shared them.

It's the first significant legislative response to the pandemic since the landmark CARES Act in March, which delivered $1.8 trillion in aid and more generous jobless benefits and direct payments to individuals. Since then, Democrats have repeatedly called for ambitious further federal steps to provide relief and battle the pandemic, while Republicans have sought to more fully reopen the economy and to avoid padding the government's $27 trillion debt.

President-elect Joe Biden is eager for an aid package to prop up the economy and deliver direct aid to the jobless and hungry, even though the package falls short of what Democrats want. He called the emerging version "an important down payment" and promised more help next year.

Republicans, too, are anxious to approve some aid before going home for the year.

"We're still close and we're gonna get there," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky told reporters Wednesday evening as he left the Capitol. And during a Senate GOP lunchtime call a day earlier, party leaders stressed the importance of reaching an agreement before the upcoming Georgia Senate runoff election.

Majesty Restaurant set to distribute free meals Sunday

Majesty Restaurant with support from private donors will be doing a free Christmas meal distribution again this Sunday, Dec. 20, from 4pm to 5pm until supplies last. No registration required.

"We encourage jobless, low income, hungry, or homeless to visit Majesty Restaurant this Sunday at 4pm," said the restaurant's management

The same grab-and-go system implemented for its Thanksgiving distribution last month where 172 meals were distributed will be used for this Sunday's Christmas meal distribution.

While Majesty Restaurant doesn't have an exact number of the total Christmas meals they plan to distribute, they will be preparing for 150 meals.

"The holiday season is a magical time of love and joy for many of us. However, we must not forget that there are still those who are suffering due to the social and economic conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," added management,

For four months now, Majesty Restaurant has been serving hot meals and relief bags every Sunday morning as part of its Full Belly, Full Hearts 1,000 Meals Initiative with support from Micronesian Brokers Inc. and Marianas Medical Center.

Since Labor Day weekend, 800 meals and relief bags have been distributed by Majesty Restaurant with help from private donors.

"Our goal is to help the unemployed, reduced hours, low-income, homeless people impacted by COVID-19. We saw firsthand the severe and painful financial impact on the tourism and restaurant industry," said Majesty Restaurant's management.

For donations of fruits, desserts, and pastries, contact FoodBox.Majesty@gmail.com

Majesty Restaurant was established in 2013. Its parent company Top Development Inc. has been in the CNMI for 30 years. ***(PR)***

Nation

US angling to secure more of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine

WASHINGTON (AP)—U.S. officials say they're actively negotiating for additional purchases of Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine after passing up a chance to lock in a contract this summer since it was still unclear how well the shots would work.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar and special adviser Dr. Moncef Slaoui also told reporters Wednesday that Pfizer had been unable to commit to a firm delivery date. Azar called that "the core issue."

There was no immediate comment from the company, whose CEO Albert Bourla told CNN this week it is "working very collaboratively" with the government to deliver additional vaccine through the federal Operation Warp Speed. That's a White House-backed, taxpayer-funded effort to quickly develop coronavirus vaccines and treatments.

Meanwhile, the FDA said late Wednesday that some Pfizer vaccine vials may contain more than the standard five doses. The FDA statement followed reports from hospital and pharmacy staff that some vials are apparently overfilled. The FDA advised health professionals to use every full dose possible "given the public health emergency." The agency said it is communicating with Pfizer about the issue.

The Trump administration has come under scathing criticism from congressional Democrats after news leaked out last week about the missed opportunity to secure more vaccine.

"We are concerned the failure to secure an adequate supply of vaccines will needlessly prolong the COVID-19 pandemic in this country, causing further loss of life and economic devastation," a group of senators led by Patty Murray of Washington and Ron Wyden of Oregon wrote HHS. "We fear this is yet another instance in which the Trump administration's failure to develop a comprehensive national vaccines plan in a timely manner could jeopardize efforts to get people vaccinated and ultimately end this pandemic."

Azar sought to rebut that concern Wednesday, saying that pending contracts with a number of manufacturers will ensure enough vaccine for all Americans by around the middle of next year. A second vaccine from Moderna appears headed for Food and Drug Administration approval within days, and more vaccine candidates are advancing through clinical trials.

But the one from Pfizer and German pharmaceutical BioNTech was first into the arms of Americans, raising hopes of taming a pandemic that has killed more than 300,000 people in the U.S. and hobbled much of the national economy. Health care workers and nursing home residents top the list as local TV stations across the country are broadcasting scenes of the first vaccinations. Some polls show skepticism about getting vaccinated may be easing.

After early failures with testing, Trump administration officials are hoping to write a very different ending with vaccines. Operation Warp Speed has financed the development, manufacture and distribution of millions of doses, with the goal of providing a free vaccine to any American who wants one.

Pfizer was not as closely involved with Operation Warp Speed as other manufacturers, preferring to retain control over its own development and manufacturing. But the government did enter into a contract to buy 100 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the first of which were shipped this week.

Thumbs down on inauguration crowds for Biden

That's the message from the congressional committee organizing inauguration ceremonies for President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris.

A day after Biden's own organizing committee announced that the swearing-in would take place on Jan. 20 outside the Capitol Building, the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies announced that permitted attendance at the event will be drastically reduced due to COVID-19 precautions.

Instead of the usual 200,000 tickets distributed to members of Congress and passed out to their constituents, organizers will allow just over 1,000 tickets — one for each of the 535 members of Congress and one guest each.

Despite this week's rollout of the new vaccine, its availability to the general public is still months away. Committee Chairman Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., said in a statement that concerns about spiraling virus numbers around the country "warranted a difficult decision to limit attendance at the 59th Inaugural Ceremonies to a live audience that resembles a State of the Union."

In a way, it's a fitting culmination for a historic presidential campaign that was conducted almost entirely under pandemic conditions. Biden's own inaugural committee, which works with the congressional committee, had already asked supporters to stay away from Washington and plan safe inaugural celebrations at home.

"We know that many Americans would have wanted to attend the Inauguration in-person. At the same time, safety must be our top priority," Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a Minnesota Democrat and member of the committee, said in the statement. "While the pandemic has forced us to limit in-person attendance, it also brings opportunities to honor our democracy in innovative ways so that Americans across the country can experience Inauguration Day from home."

Biden's team has turned to the same production team that handled the largely virtual Democratic National Convention. Features of that convention, such as the virtual roll call from every state, may be incorporated into a virtual inauguration experience.

Blunt said planners were developing "enhanced opportunities to watch the ceremonies online, in addition to the traditional televised national broadcast." ***(AP)***

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-21-005
A-2, A-5 AND A-6 SEWER LIFT STATION RENOVATION

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the A-2, A-5 and A-6 Sewer Lift Station Renovation project in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of the renovation of the existing A-2, A-5 and A-6 sewer lift stations, including but not limited to the renovation of the existing generator buildings or the construction of a new generator building, the renovation or relocation of the wet wells with all new pipings, fittings, pumps, generators, and other equipment and appurtenances. The project also includes the installation of a temporary by-pass system and the relocation of existing utilities to accommodate construction activities. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the sewer system. CUC requires the Project to be completed in ***365* calendar days** from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on December 16, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST) at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-21-005, A-2, A-5 and A-6 Sewer Lift Station Renovation"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) January 6, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time.

Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

Bids shall be accompanied by a bid guarantee of not less than fifteen percent (15%) of the amount of the bid. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on December 18, 2020** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Nicolette Villagomez, CUC Water & Wastewater, Engineer nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, CUC P&S, Senior Administrative Technician christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY BOYER SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-21-011
ISLEY BOOSTER II TRANSMISSION AND BOOSTER PUMP UPGRADE

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Isley Booster II Transmission and Booster Pump Upgrade in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of upgrading of existing Isley Booster II Pump Station (IB-2); installation of new transmission line to the existing Dandan tank; rehabilitation of existing IB-2 concrete sump tank, yard piping, aboveground flowmeter and valve station with concrete pad, and all other appurtenances at the IB-2 site; construction of a new chlorine and electrical building; installation of new booster pump system (triplex system); construction of new perimeter security fencing and facility lighting; and restoration of existing asphalt concrete road. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **300 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **December 15, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-21-011, Isley Booster II Transmission and Booster Pump Upgrade** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 05, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time.

Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms.

Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) of the total bid price shall accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (ChST) on December 21, 2020** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Edgar Tuazon, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email edgar.tuazon@cucgov.org and Ms. Marcela Tenorio, Administrative Technician Senior via email - marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any non-material imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Asia

S. Korea marks deadliest day, over 1K cases

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea has added more than 1,000 infections to its coronavirus caseload for the second straight day amid growing fears that the virus is spreading out of control in the greater capital area.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency on Thursday said the COVID-19 death toll was now at 634 after 22 patients died in the past 24 hours, the deadliest day since the emergence of the pandemic. Among 12,209 active patients, 242 are in serious or critical condition.

Nearly 800 of the 1,014 new cases were reported from the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, where health officials have raised alarm about a looming shortage in hospital capacities. Thursday marked the 40th consecutive day of triple digit daily jumps, which brought the national caseload to 46,453.

The viral resurgence came after months of pandemic fatigue, complacency and government efforts to breathe life into a sluggish economy.

Officials are now mulling whether to raise social distancing restriction to maximum levels, which could possibly include bans on gatherings of more than 10 people, shutting tens of thousands of businesses deemed non-essential and requiring companies to have more employees work from home.

Elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region:

■ Authorities are searching for the source of an emerging COVID-19 cluster in Sydney's northern coastal suburbs. Australia's largest city had gone 12 consecutive days without community transmission until Wednesday, when a driver who transported international air crews in a van to and from Sydney Airport tested positive for the coronavirus. By Thursday, six people had been infected with the virus though community transmission in Sydney, as well as six returned travelers who had been infected overseas and tested positive while in hotel quarantine. The new infections include a woman who works at the Pittwater Palms aged care home, which has since been closed to visitors. A drummer in a band that had played in several clubs around Sydney in recent days has also been infected.

■ The Australian Open men's tennis tournament will begin three weeks later than planned on Feb. 8 because of the pandemic. The ATP said that men's qualifying for the season's first Grand Slam tournament is being moved to Doha, Qatar, from Jan. 10-13. That will be followed by a period of about 2 1/2 weeks set aside for travel to Melbourne and a 14-day quarantine period for players and their coaches or other support staff. Other tournaments that will not take place next year include the New York Open and an event in Auckland, New Zealand. The ATP is looking for new dates for the Rio Open, which was supposed to begin Feb. 17 but now conflicts with the two-week Australian Open main draw. As with other sports, tennis was disrupted this year because of the COVID-19 outbreak, including several months with no competition, the postponement of the French Open's start from May to September, and the cancelation of Wimbledon for the first time since World War II.

Taliban team in Pakistan as calls grow for Afghan cease-fire

ISLAMABAD (AP)—A Taliban team, led by the co-founder of the insurgent movement, arrived Wednesday in Islamabad for talks with Pakistani government leaders amid growing calls for a reduction in violence in neighboring Afghanistan.

The visit came as the Taliban unleashed a wave of attacks in Afghanistan, striking in northern Baghlan and southern Uruzgan province late on Tuesday and early Wednesday. At least 19 members of the Afghan security forces and 11 Taliban fighters were killed in fierce battles, officials said.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar and his delegation were summoned to Islamabad from Qatar, where they have been negotiating since September with Afghan government representatives, officials close to the talks said. The visit comes on the heels of U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad's quick trip on Tuesday to Pakistan's military in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

The Pakistani military has wielded significant influence over the Taliban and has had links with some of their leaders —then part of the U.S.-backed mujahedeen—dating back to the 1980s and the former Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. The Taliban emerged in 1994 in response to runaway corruption and violence of mujahedeen warlords who took power from the former communist regime in 1992.

Pakistan was key in getting the Taliban to the negotiation table with the United States in 2018. Those talks eventually led to the U.S.-Taliban deal that was signed in February, providing for the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan.

The deal also paved way for the start of talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government, which began in September in efforts to hammer out a roadmap for postwar Afghanistan. The talks, after some recent procedural progress, have been suspended till early January and there is speculation the resumption could be further delayed.

Kabul has called for the talks to resume inside Afghanistan while the Taliban insist they continue in Doha, Qatar, where they maintain a political office.

Meanwhile, Washington has been increasingly frustrated by a spike in violence in Afghanistan and calls for a cease-fire have been reaching crescendo in both Kabul and in Washington.

Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem tweeted late Tuesday that "a high level delegation" led by Baradar "left for Islamabad at the official invitation" of Pakistan. The delegation will meet Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan in Thursday and met Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, as well as military officials.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-20-007

FINA SISU WATERLINE REPLACEMENT (W16-051)

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Fina Sisu Waterline Replacement in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists, in general installation of a new main waterline and lateral service line; connection to the existing waterline; relocation of water meters from private property to right-of-way, installation of gate valve assembly, flush hydrants, fire hydrants, air release valves, existing laterals service tap relocation to new main waterline, restoration of existing asphalt concrete road, restoration of existing concrete slab on grade; and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the United Sates of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **365 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 28, 2020 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-20-007s, Fina Sisu Water Line Replacement"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 14, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Bids shall be accompanied by a bid guarantee of not less than fifteen percent (15%) of the amount of the bid. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 4, 2021** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Dennis Formalejo, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email dennis.formalejo@cucgov.org and Ms. Chrisite L. Sablan, CUC's Senior Administrative Technician via email christie.sablan@cucgov.org .

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any non-material imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

UNITED STATES
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 12, the CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities hereby gives notice that it will hold its 4th Quarter General Membership Meeting on December 30, 2020 from 9:30am to 12:30pm at the Pacific Islands Club, Charley's Cabaret, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Review & Adoption of Agenda of December 30, 2020
IV. Review & Adoption of Meeting Minutes of July 22, 2020
V. Reports
  a. Chairperson
  b. State Plan Committee Chairperson
  c. Fiscal Committee Chairperson
  d. Executive Director
VI. Old Business
  a. COVID-19 Pandemic Update
  b. Emergency Preparedness Update
VII. New Business
  a. DD Basic Grant State Plan Development Survey
  b. Assistive Technology Low Tech Tip
  c. March 2021 - DD Awareness Month
  d. Disability Awareness Campaign
VIII. Action Items
  a. Ratify the Approval of the Amended FY 2020 DD Basic Grant Budget
  b. Ratify the Approval of the Amended FY 2020 Assistive Technology Grant Budget
IX. Miscellaneous
X. Next Meeting – March 2021
XI. Adjournment

Note: Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 13(a) 7, the Council may vote to meet in Executive Session.

In accordance to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals who wish to attend this meeting and require special accommodations are requested to call the Council 5 days in advance at 664-7000. The Public is welcome to submit written or 3 minutes oral comments regarding the agenda above.

/s/ Jan Barcinas
Chairperson

This ad was paid for by funds from the DD Basic Grant Part A (Administrative)

World

UK rows back on Christmas easing advice

AP
A man wears a face mask as she skates past a closed pub in Soho, in London, Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2020.

LONDON (AP)—No need to take it to the max.

That's the new Christmas message that leaders of the U.K.'s four nations were spreading Wednesday, after toughening up their advice over what people should do during the holiday period.

Last month, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland agreed to permit a maximum of three households to mix between Dec. 23 and Dec. 27, regardless of what local restrictions are in place.

But following a sharp spike in new infections—another 25,161 were recorded Wednesday, the highest since Nov. 14—families are being urged to consider the rules as the outer limits of what they can do.

"Have yourselves a merry little Christmas and, I'm afraid, this year I do mean little," British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said at a press briefing. "I want to stress these are maximums, not targets."

His comments echoed those of other leaders elsewhere, though Wales said it will legislate to limit bubbles to two households.

Johnson said it would be "inhuman" to ban Christmas but that in light of the "worrying" rises in new infections in some parts of the country, people should think hard about what to do. He said anyone planning to meet others during the easing should start limiting contacts from this Friday, for example.

Professor Chris Whitty, the government's chief medical officer, said the advice was akin to driving at the speed limit in icy conditions.

"Just because you can doesn't mean you should," he said.

Concerns over the planned easing have ratcheted higher in recent days. With new infections rising in many places, many fear that the relaxation will only lead to more deaths. On Wednesday, the U.K. recorded another 612 COVID-related fatalities, taking the total to 65,520 — Europe's second-highest behind Italy.

The confusion surrounding the scheduled easing has been exacerbated by the fact that many parts of the country have seen restrictions tightened this week. On Wednesday, London and nearby areas entered the highest level of local restrictions in England—Tier 3— in which pubs and restaurants had to close again apart from takeout, and more curbs were placed on different households meeting up.

Johnson also said the elderly and the most vulnerable should be vaccinated by the early part of 2021. The U.K. is rolling out the vaccine developed by America's Pfizer and the German company BioNTech after becoming on Dec. 8 the first country in the world to authorize it.

Other vaccines, from American biotechnology firm Moderna and one developed by the University of Oxford and British pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca, are currently being assessed by British regulators.

Britain's new vaccines minister, Nadhim Zahawi, said Wednesday that 137,897 people had received a shot since inoculations began. They must all return in three weeks for a follow-up shot.

The government, which is providing the vaccine free of charge mainly at hospitals so far, is first targeting nursing home workers and people over 80. Nursing home residents are now being vaccinated as well after issues relating to the transportation of the vaccine, which needs to be kept at super-cold temperatures, were addressed.

Despite the update, questions remain over how many people can be inoculated on any given day, and what proportion of people being offered the vaccine are agreeing to get a shot.

To date, 800,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine are known to be in the U.K. and 5 million more are expected to arrive this year, half the original expectation.

"With the vaccine, and all the other measures we are taking, we do know that things will be better in this country by Easter," Johnson said. "And, I'm sure that next year Christmas will be as normal as usual for every family in the country."

Nigerians anxious after 330 boys kidnapped by extremists

KANKARA, Nigeria (AP)—Anger, fear and exhaustion. Anxiety has overwhelmed many parents in Nigeria's northern Kankara village who await word on their sons who are among the more than 330 kidnapped by extremists from a government boys' school last week.

They held onto hope as the Katsina State governor Aminu Bello Masari said that 17 boys have been rescued since the attack, including 15 by the military, another by police and one boy found roaming in the forest who was brought in by residents.

Nigeria's Boko Haram jihadist rebels have claimed responsibility for the abduction of the students from the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara. Hundreds of other students managed to escape by jumping the fence during the extremists' attack or by fleeing as they were taken into the nearby forest.

Boko Haram kidnapped the boys from the school because it believes Western education is un-Islamic, the rebels' leader Abubakar Shekau said in a video claiming responsibility for the attack, according to SITE Intelligence Group.

The Nigerian government is in talks with the attackers in an effort to free the boys, government spokesman Garba Shehu said in a statement. He did not, however, identify the attackers who the government earlier described as bandits.

Aminu Ma'le, whose child was among the 17 who regained their freedom, said "I give thanks to God for helping us out in a miraculous way, and I pray for the safety of other children still missing or in captivity." His son was found wandering in the bush by the military, he said.

Parents say they are tired of waiting for the situation in the north, home to President Muhammadu Buhari, to improve.

"There's no way I can measure my anger now," said Marwa Hamza Kankara, camping outside the school Tuesday night for word of her son. "No woman wants to be outside at this hour but we cannot sleep, we cannot eat, because of our missing children."

Hamza says that all those missing belong to Nigeria. "I am not only crying for my child but I am crying for all the children," she said.

When armed patrols go by, parents outside the school momentarily gain hope that they may have found their sons.

Across Nigeria, people are closely following the fate of the kidnapped boys and many criticize the government for the continuing extremist violence.

"Nobody is happy about the insecurity in the country. Even kids are afraid of being in present Nigeria because of insecurity," said 58-year-old Syvester Anachike, who sells newspapers in Abuja. "Just imagine, the children been abducted in the president's state! It is unfair. It's not good."

Friday's abduction has become a rallying cry for Nigerians fed up with the ongoing extremist violence. #BringBackOurBoys is trending on Twitter as people express their frustrations and hark back to 2014 when the #BringBackOurGirls campaign became an international rallying cry for girls kidnapped from a government boarding school in Chibok, in northeastern Nigeria.

"One thing that seems obvious about the security challenge is that there is no fair play and transparency from the leadership," said Chiroma Shibu, a member of the National Youth Assembly of Nigeria, a non-profit organization created by students and other young people from around country.

Belarus opposition calls for EU support as it collects prize

BRUSSELS (AP)—Former Belarus presidential candidate Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya urged the European Union to step up its support for embattled democracy protesters in her country, as she picked up the EU's top human rights prize Wednesday on behalf of a group of opposition leaders.

"Without a free Belarus, Europe is not fully free either. We ask Europe and the whole world to stand with Belarus," Tsikhanouskaya told lawmakers in Brussels as she collected the Sakharov Prize, which was awarded by the European Parliament to the Belarus opposition in October.

Holding aloft photographs of Belarusians who have rallied against authoritarian Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, protesters who often been detained and beaten by security forces, she dedicated the award to them. At the same time, Tsikhanouskaya appealed to the 27-nation bloc to be braver in its actions.

"Standing for democracy and human rights is not interference, but it is duty of each self-respecting country," she told EU lawmakers, speaking in English. "Your solidarity and your voice are important, but it is actions that matter."

Mass protests have gripped Belarus since official results from the Aug. 9 presidential election gave Lukashenko a landslide victory over his popular rival, Tsikhanouskaya, and a sixth term in office. She and her supporters refused to recognize the result, saying the vote was riddled with fraud, and some poll workers came forward to detail how the election was rigged in their areas.

The EU also refuses to recognize the results and has imposed sanctions on Lukashenko and several of his associates.

Belarus authorities have cracked down hard on the largely peaceful demonstrations, the biggest of which attracted up to 200,000 people. Police have used stun grenades, tear gas and truncheons to disperse the rallies. Mass detentions have continued.

Off The Wall

Florida's new python-sniffing dogs have 1st success

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP)—Truman, the python-sniffing black Labrador retriever, recently tracked down his first snake in a new program Florida is using to eradicate the invasive species.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission recently began training Truman and another dog named Eleanor to detect a python's scent and alert handlers when they've come across one. The first success was last week when Truman found an 8-foot (2.4-meter) Burmese python in the Rocky Glades Public Small Game Hunting Area in Miami-Dade County.

"We've got to stay innovative. We've got to try new approaches and the detector dogs is just one area where we're doing that," commission Executive Director Eric Sutton. told commissioners during an update Wednesday.

He showed commissioners pictures of the dogs during a virtual meeting, including one with Truman standing behind the massive snake he found.

"They're hard workers, commissioners. They really are very dedicated and you can see that they're very proud and they should be," Sutton said.

Estimated to number between 100,000 and 300,000, pythons have become a threat to the fragile Florida Everglades ecosystem as they devour native mammals and birds, disrupting the natural balance of predator and prey. They've been successful at reproducing in the swampy Everglades because they have no predators. Females can lay up to 100 eggs.

Trainers use python-scented towels and live pythons with surgically implanted trackers to teach the dogs to pick up a snake's scent. The dogs were trained for more than a month before going out in the wild, according to the agency's website.

And while Burmese pythons have been known to eat small alligators and small deer, Truman and Eleanor are trained to stay about 3 feet (1 meter) away from the reptiles.

The battle to contain the pythons in the Everglades and nearby areas has been a difficult one for Florida, and Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis made increasing eradication efforts a budget priority. He also signed a bill that allows drones to be used to track down the snakes.

Sutton told commissioners that snake hunters hired by the state captured about 6,300 pythons over the last four years. He said nearly 40% of that total was in 2020 alone and credited the governor for the increased attention on the problem.

Truman sits near an area where he tracked down an 8-foot-python, Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2020, in Miami-Dade County, Fla. AP

Prague zoo's Sumatran orangutan finally has a name

PRAGUE (AP)—He's called Pustakawan, or Kawi, if you wish.

Prague's zoo said on Wednesday it has finally completed the process of naming a critically endangered Sumatran orangutan baby born on its premises on Nov 17.

It took a while, because the zookeepers had to go through more than 4,000 proposals submitted by members of the public.

Kawi is the fourth baby for his mother, Mawar, and the first for father Pagy.

His name means Librarian in Indonesian, zoo officials said. Librarian was the name of an orangutan in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series of fantasy novels.

The species has been drastically reduced by hunting and by destruction of its forest habitat. Only around 14,000 of the great apes with long red hair are believed to exist in the wild.

Kawi, a newly born baby of critically endangered Sumatran orangutan, holds on to his mother Mawar at their enclosure at the zoo in Prague, Czech Republic, Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2020. Kawi was born on Nov. 17. 2020. AP

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Chihuahua dog missing for 5 years in California is found

POMONA, Calif. (AP)—A Chihuahua dog named Sweet-Pea who went missing five years ago in Southern California has been found and is back home. The tiny dog was reunited with her owner on thanks to microchip identification, KNBC-TV reported Tuesday. Sweet-Pea went missing in the city of Compton in 2015. The Inland Valley Humane Society found her about 30 miles (48 kilometers) away in the community of Covina. Sweet-Pea appeared to have been well-cared for during her long absence, KNBC-TV reported. There were no immediate details disclosed about where the dog stayed while away from her owner. Having Sweet-Pea back "means the world to me," owner Ursula Lopez told KNBC-TV.

Precious painting lost at German airport found at dumpster

BERLIN (AP) — A surrealist painting worth more than a quarter million euros (dollars) that was forgotten by a businessman at Duesseldorf's airport has been recovered from a nearby recycling dumpster, police said Thursday. The businessman, whose identity was not given, accidentally left behind the painting by French surrealist Yves Tanguy at a check-in counter as he boarded a flight from Duesseldorf to Tel Aviv on Nov. 27. By the time he landed in Israel and contacted Duesseldorf police, the 280,000-Euro (340,000-dollar) oeuvre, which had been wrapped in cardboard, had disappeared.

50 people won a Massachusetts lottery game, most on record

BOSTON (AP) — Fifty people won the Massachusetts lottery game Mass Cash on Sunday, a record according to the state lottery agency. For a dollar, players choose five numbers between 1 and 35 and mark the choice on a slip. WCVB-TV reported on Monday that 50 people chose the winning combination of numbers. The largest previous number of people to win at once was 34, Massachusetts State Lottery official Christian Teja told the broadcaster. In this case, he said, the winning numbers all appeared in a column on the betting slip, which may account for why there were so many winners.

MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION

On behalf of the Late

†Valentin Gaspar Del Rosario Jr.

also known as 'Totoy'

we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all our families, relatives, & friends near and far. Your thoughts and prayers at this difficult time has helped us endured the loss of of our beloved Totoy.

Our Family would like to express our most grateful gratitude and appreciation to Dr. James Hofschneider, Dr. Peter Brett, Oncology staff, CHCC, Nurses, Borja Funeral Homes, Fr. Jason Granado, Santo Nino Group, Mariano & Barbie Fajardo Family, to our Techa' Eydie uy and to all who have helped us in one way or another. Your presence, compassion, and generosity will always be remembered.

Thank you & Maraming Salamat Po.
Merlyn Del Rosario & Family

Science & Technology

US govt, states sue Facebook for 'predatory' conduct

By MARCY GORDON and MICHAEL R. SISAK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)—The U.S. government and 48 states and districts—including Guam—sued Facebook Wednesday, accusing it of abusing its market power in social networking to crush smaller competitors and seeking remedies that could include a forced spinoff of the social network's Instagram and WhatsApp messaging services.

The landmark antitrust lawsuits, announced by the Federal Trade Commission and New York Attorney General Letitia James, mark the second major government offensive this year against seemingly untouchable tech behemoths. The Justice Department sued Google in October for abusing its dominance in online search and advertising—the government's most significant attempt to buttress competition since its historic case against Microsoft two decades ago. Amazon and Apple also have been under investigation in Congress and by federal authorities for alleged anticompetitive conduct.

James noted at a press conference that "it's really critically important that we block this predatory acquisition of companies and that we restore confidence to the market."

The FTC said Facebook has engaged in a "a systematic strategy" to eliminate its competition, including by purchasing smaller up-and-coming rivals like Instagram in 2012 and WhatsApp in 2014. James echoed that in her press conference, saying Facebook "used its monopoly power to crush smaller rivals and snuff out competition, all at the expense of everyday users."

IN CELEBRATION OF HER NEW LIFE

†Joan Bloedel Kani

Born on September 20, 1931 Died on December 8, 2020

In her new life, she will be with her:
Father: †Harwood Bloedel
Mother: †Gladys Bloedel
Father-in-Law: †Pedro I. Kani
Mother-in-Law: †Antonia P. Kani

Her memories will forever be alive in the hearts of her:
Husband: Jose P. Kani
Children: Kerry Roper (Brock and Taylor)
Tara K. Magofna (Brandon and Byron)
Randy Gengler (Whitney and Joey)

Brothers: Elman Bloedel
Roger Bloedel
Rear sister: Jeanne Rayphand

In Laws:
Leonardo Kani/Mertie Kani and children
Juana K. Phillip/†Betsin Phillip and children
Alejo Kani and children
Rosanna Spizzirri/Lawrence Twelbang
Celina Kani/Francisco Camacho and children
Fabiana Kani/Antonio Norita and children
Gilbert Kani/Margarita Kalen and children
†Nicholas P. Kani

She will be missed by numerous friends and family members.

On Monday, December 21st, her remains will leave CHCC Morgue at 8:00am
to Nuestra Senora Delos Remedios Church for public viewing from 8:30am – 10:30am.

Mass of Christian Burial will begin at 11:00am followed immediately by interment services
at Tanapag Cemetery where she will be laid to rest.

Refreshments will be served after burial at Kani's Residence in Tanapag.
We appreciate your kind thoughts and prayers.

Si Yu'us Ma'ase, Thank you very much

From Jose P. Kani and family

What to do if FaceTime video calls disconnect

TECH Q&A

By STEVE ALEXANDER
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Steve Alexander covers technology for the Minneapolis Star Tribune. *Readers may write to him at Tech Q&A, 425 Portland Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn. 55488-0002; email: steve.j.alexander@gmail.com. Please include a full name, city and phone number.*

Q: When I make a FaceTime video call over Wi-Fi, my iPhone XS drops the call shortly after connecting. This doesn't happen when I use an iPhone 6, iPad Air or iMac on the same Wi-Fi network. What's wrong?

A: It's not unusual to have a dropped FaceTime call, and there are several possible causes.

The first thing to check is whether you and the person you are calling both have strong Wi-Fi signals (the weaker the signal, the less data-carrying capacity.) You need a download speed of at least 5 megabits per second (mbps) for a FaceTime call (to check, go to speedtest.net.)

If your Wi-Fi connection isn't that fast, one solution is for the callers to move closer to their Wi-Fi routers to get a better signal. Another is to supplement your too-slow Wi-Fi connection with your cellular connection. To do that, open Settings, click Cellular and make sure FaceTime is turned on. Then scroll down and make sure "Wi-Fi Assist" is on. (Warning: If FaceTime switches over to cellular data too often, it may use a lot of your monthly data allotment.)

Here are other things to look for:

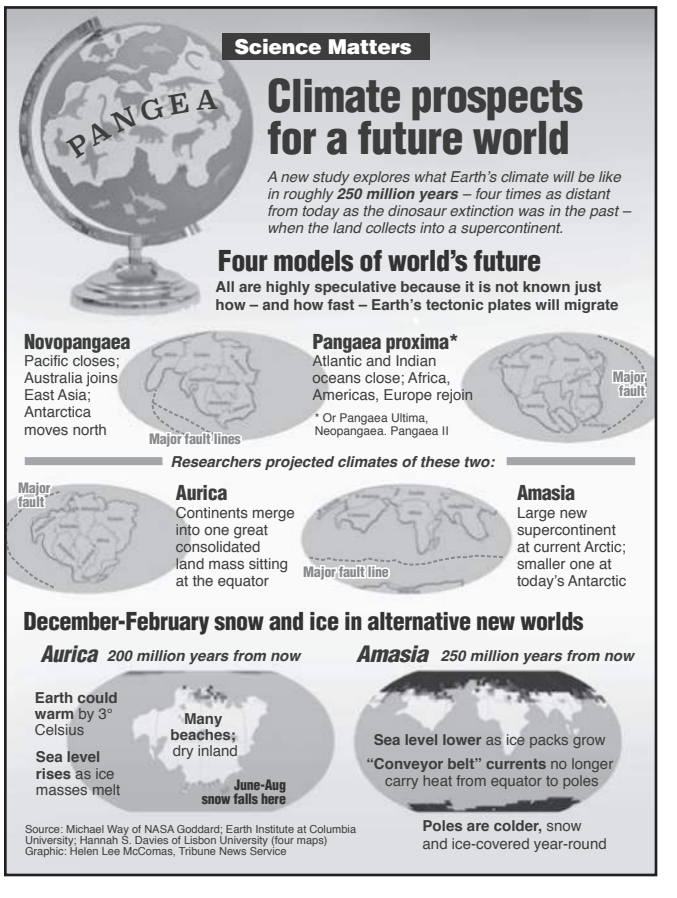
■ Make sure all devices on a FaceTime call have the same version of Apple's iOS operating system (check by going to Settings, clicking General, then clicking Software Update.)

■ Adjust the phone's settings. Go to Settings, click General, then scroll down and click Reset. Choose Reset Network Settings. Afterward, you will need to re-enter your Wi-Fi password.

(For other potential solutions, see tinyurl.com/yxkcbwqj).

Q: I have about 500 3.5-inch floppy disks, and some Commodore computer equipment. Does anyone have a use for these things, or is the landfill the best solution?

A: Old computers and floppy disks are valuable only to collectors (see "Commodore Collectors" at tinyurl.com/y33u7qtm). But if you can't give away your gear, your computer equipment can be recycled to reclaim the metals it contains. Recycling is available at Best Buy stores (see tinyurl.com/y2kjppyt), much of it for free. Unfortunately, floppy disks contain nothing worth recycling (they are just plastic disks with an iron oxide coating), so they have to be discarded.


Science Matters
Climate prospects for a future world
A new study explores what Earth's climate will be like in roughly 250 million years – four times as distant from today as the dinosaur extinction was in the past – when the land collects into a supercontinent.
PANGEA
Four models of world's future
All are highly speculative because it is not known just how – and how fast – Earth's tectonic plates will migrate
Novopangaea
Pacific closes; Australia joins East Asia; Antarctica moves north
Major fault lines
Pangaea proxima*
Atlantic and Indian oceans close; Africa, Americas, Europe rejoin
* Or Pangaea Ultima, Neopangaea. Pangaea II
Major fault
Researchers projected climates of these two:
Major fault
Aurica
Continents merge into one great consolidated land mass sitting at the equator
Major fault line
Amasia
Large new supercontinent at current Arctic; smaller one at today's Antarctic
December-February snow and ice in alternative new worlds
Aurica 200 million years from now
Earth could warm by 3° Celsius
Sea level rises as ice masses melt
Many beaches; dry inland
June-Aug snow falls here
Amasia 250 million years from now
Sea level lower as ice packs grow
"Conveyor belt" currents no longer carry heat from equator to poles
Poles are colder, snow and ice-covered year-round
Source: Michael Way of NASA Goddard; Earth Institute at Columbia University; Hannah S. Davies of Lisbon University (four maps)
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service

Life & Style

AP

In this Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2020 file photo, actor Tom Cruise wears a face mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as he greets fans during a break from shooting Mission Impossible 7, along Rome's Fori Imperiali avenue.

On a mission: Tom Cruise insists on social distancing on set

LONDON (AP)—Tom Cruise has launched an expletive-laden rant at colleagues on the set of his latest "Mission: Impossible" movie, after he reportedly spotted two workers failing to respect social distancing rules.

In audio released by the Sun tabloid, the 58-year-old Hollywood star can be heard warning that anyone caught not following the rules to stay at least 2 meters (more than 6.5 feet) away from others will be fired.

"If I see you doing it again, you're f—-ing gone and if anyone on this crew does it, that's it," he is heard saying on the audio recorded during filming in Britain. "That's it. No apologies."

During his outburst at Warner Bros. Studios in Leavesden, which is around 30 miles (around 50 kilometers) north of London, Cruise catalogued the difficulties he and everyone in the film industry are facing during the coronavirus pandemic. The timing of the outburst was not clear, though the Sun said production of the movie returned to Britain two weeks ago.

Many movies have either been delayed until after the pandemic is over or because of COVID-related delays on set, including the seventh instalment of the "Mission: Impossible" franchise.

During his outburst, Cruise notes the higher costs for insuring a movie in these times. He also voices his concerns about the direct impact on families and their ability to pay bills if the movie shuts down.

"That's what I sleep with every night," he said. "Do you understand the responsibility that you have?"

Cruise's publicist didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Germany cops pursue possible break in theft of Can. gold coin

BERLIN (AP)—Berlin police raided homes and jewelry shops Wednesday on suspicion they could be connected to efforts to fence a massive 100-kilogram (220-pound) Canadian gold coin—piece by piece—that was stolen from a museum in the German capital.

The coin, with an estimated value of 3.75 million euros ($4.45 million) was stolen from Berlin's Bode Museum in 2017 and has not yet been recovered.

The morning raids were focused on eight suspects, aged between 14 and 51, of various nationalities, police said.

They are alleged to have been part of a ring that obtained stolen gold to melt it down and forge collector coins, then sell them as genuine through jewelry stores operated by them or their relatives. Some of the counterfeits are already circulating, police said.

The searches led to the discovery of counterfeit coins, forgery tools and a "five-digit" sum of cash, police said.

"The evaluation of the evidence is ongoing," police said. "Among other things, a possible connection to the theft of the gold coin from the Bode Museum is being be examined."

Berlin prosecutors said there were no arrests but that the investigation was continuing.

The searches came just two days after the arrest of a key suspect in the spectacular theft of 18th-century jewels from a Dresden museum last year, who is from a crime family linked to the Canadian gold coin theft.

Mohamed Remmo, 21, was arrested by Berlin authorities in a car in the Neukoelln district of the city on Monday evening. His twin brother, Abdul Majed Remmo, remains on the lam.

Police and prosecutors would not comment on whether there was a connection between the arrest and the searches, but members of the same family were convicted earlier this year for the Canadian gold coin theft.

Cousins Ahmed Remmo and Wissam Remmo, along with a friend who worked as a security guard at the museum, were all convicted of that Canadian gold coin heist and sentenced to several years in prison.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Sales top 3 million for Barack Obama's "A Promised Land'

NEW YORK (AP)—Just a month after publication, Barack Obama's "A Promised Land" is well on its way to becoming the best-selling presidential memoir in modern times. Crown announced Wednesday that sales have topped 3.3 million copies in the U.S. and Canada, within range of Bill Clinton's "My Life" and George W. Bush's "Decision Points," both of which have sold between 3.5 million and 4 million. "Personal Memoirs of Ulysses Grant" sold hundreds of thousands of copies when published in the 1880s, and remains in print, but there are no precise records of its total sales. "A Promised Land," the first of two planned volumes, covers Obama's election in 2008 and much of his first term. No release date has been set for the second book. Previous works, written before he became president, include the million sellers "Dreams from My Father" and "The Audacity of Hope." Obama still has to catch up to his wife, Michelle Obama, whose "Becoming" has sold more than 8 million copies in North America since coming out in 2018.

Texas oilman's Ansel Adams photo gets $988,000 at auction

DALLAS (AP)—A West Texas oilman's mural-sized print of an Ansel Adams photo has sold for nearly $1 million at an auction. Sotheby's New York, the auction house, said Tuesday that "The Grand Tetons and the Snake River, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming" sold for $988,000, a record price for Adams at auction. The photograph, taken on commission for the Department of Interior in 1942, shows a view of the mountains over Jackson Hole. Sotheby's said it's believed to be one of less than 10 mural-sized prints of the image in existence and was acquired from the photographer's descendants. The photo was among 115 works by Adams, including single prints and portfolios, that sold at auction Monday for $6.4 million, Sotheby's said. They were all part of David Arrington's collection. Sotheby's said Arrington, 60, has been interested in photography since he was a teen. Arrington said in a video posted on the auction house's website that he's collected 650 of Adams' photographs, and that it was time to let go of some. "I've been asked numerous times: How come you collected so many of one artist? And the only thing I could come up with was: I'm a Texan, and we overdo everything," Arrington said in the video.

Mom working swing shift is pressured to stay on the job

DEAR ABBY: My hubby and I come from very different backgrounds. He grew up in a community where all the moms had to work. I grew up in one where most of the moms did not. Our marriage was perfect until we had a baby.

After our first child was born, my hubby made clear that it was unacceptable for me to leave my career or reduce my working hours. I never realized I would have the desire to be a stay-at-home mom or work part-time until I became a mom.

For the last several years, I have chosen to work swing shifts so I can be available for my children during the mornings. But this has taken such a toll on my health that I have had to get antidepressant prescriptions to cope with juggling all of this.

Recently, I told my husband I would like to work an earlier shift so my health can improve. Again he insists this is unacceptable because of the reduced pay I'd receive plus the high cost of child care.

He's a wonderful father to the children, and aside from this sole issue, we have no other problems. He makes me feel like a work mule, though, always trying to squeeze every last dollar out of me I can earn. I don't want a divorce. I do love him. I'm considering telling him my job is requiring me to switch shift times, which isn't true. Is it ever appropriate and acceptable to be dishonest to your spouse?

WORK MULE MAMA

DEAR MAMA: Your husband's priorities appear to be out of whack, but I don't think you should lie to him. Repeat that the shift you are working is taking a toll on your HEALTH and that antidepressants aren't a cure for what's ailing you.

A husband is not supposed to be a dictator. As long as the two of you can make it financially, you should be able to set your own hours. Inform your doctor about everything you have told me and get off the medication. As much as you love your husband, you are not a "mule." If you continue on the path you're on, you will weaken your immune system and risk becoming seriously ill. How will you parent your children (or work) then?

DEAR ABBY: For the past five years, I have been dealing with my aunt, who is convinced that the neighbors are coming into her apartment, hacking her phone, her refrigerator, threatening her, cooking in her kitchen and constantly talking about her. Everyone has tried reasoning with her, but she insists she's OK and nothing is wrong with her.

She has fixated on these neighbors ever since she had a run-in with them years ago. They don't even live there anymore, but she says they do. I'm trying to be kind, patient and understanding with her, but she is making me nuts. Please help.

ALARMED IN INDIANA

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

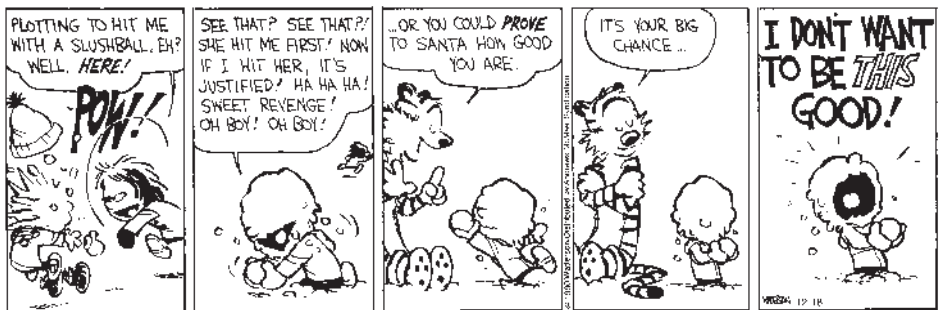
DEAR ALARMED: I'll try. Your aunt's irrational behavior should be reported to her physician, if she has one, so she can be evaluated. None of what you have described about her behavior is rational or normal. She needs a physical and neurological examination by a medical professional who can guide you in how to handle this because it isn't going to get better on its own.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

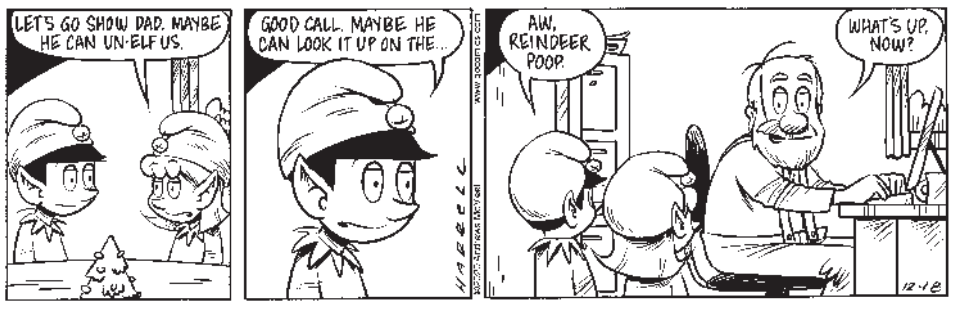

PLOTTING TO HIT ME WITH A SLUSHBALL, EH? WELL, HERE!
POW!!
SEE THAT? SEE THAT?! SHE HIT ME FIRST! NOW IF I HIT HER, IT'S JUSTIFIED! HA HA HA! SWEET REVENGE! OH BOY! OH BOY!
...OR YOU COULD PROVE TO SANTA HOW GOOD YOU ARE.
IT'S YOUR BIG CHANCE...
I DON'T WANT TO BE THIS GOOD!

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

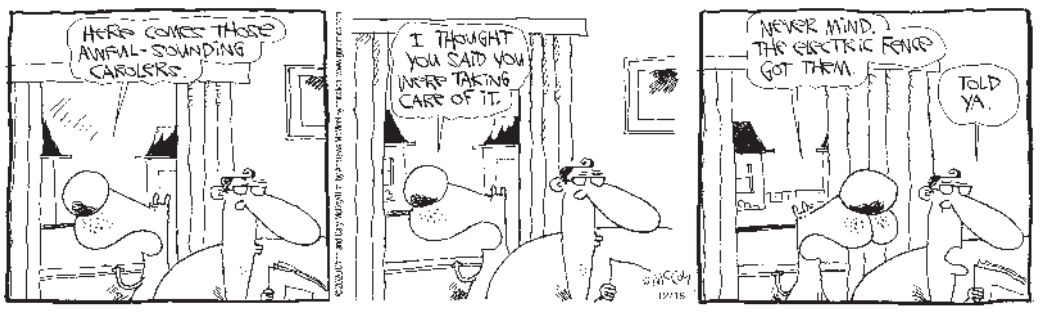
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


HERE COMES THOSE AWFUL-SOUNDING CAROLERS.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WERE TAKING CARE OF IT.
NEVER MIND. THE ELECTRIC FENCE GOT THEM.
TOLD YA.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Weary sounds
6 Sit-up targets
9 Two, in Acapulco
12 Livid
13 Campaigned
14 Tolkien creature
15 Hayek of "Frida"
16 Italian astronomer
18 Metallic mixtures
20 Jack of early talk TV
21 Fan's cry
23 Costa del —
24 In a timid way
25 Thick chunk
27 Paris subway
29 Neaten
31 Door hardware
35 Western resort lake
37 Roof overhang
38 Showy parrot
41 Apt. divisions
43 Salonga of "Miss Saigon"
44 Pinnacle
45 Little accident
47 Biblical sea
49 Wanders
52 Hosp. scan
53 Author Fleming
54 Vacant, as a flat
55 One-time link
56 Last (Abbr.)
57 Defeats

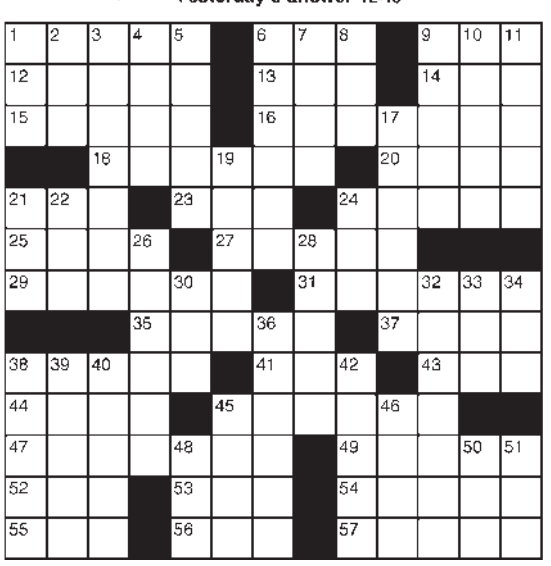
DOWN

1 Bro's kin
2 Roth svgs. plan
3 Round Table knight
4 Webmaster's code
5 Elite Navy group
6 Sock pattern
7 Sheepish remarks
8 NBC weekend show
9 Postpone
10 Tatum of "Paper Moon"
11 Bedtime reading
17 Droid's rival
19 Pizzazz
21 Trio after Q
22 Foreman foe
24 Lanka lead-in
26 One way to get around New York City
28 "— the breaks!"
30 Motor City labor org.
32 Female buds
33 Leading lady?
34 Mermaid's home
36 Set straight
38 Igneous rock source
39 Separated
40 Salsa singer Cruz
42 Bush
45 Repast
46 First-rate
48 Actress Lucy
50 Ran into
51 Map lines (Abbr.)

Solution time: 25 mins.

M	E	S	H		C	R	B		O	M	I	¯
A	C	H	E		J	N	E		L	A	R	A
T	R	A	M		T	A	E		I	R	A	S
H	U	M	M	U	S		R	A	V	I	N	E
			E	P	I			N	E	G		
H	E	A	D		D	R	A	G	S	O	U	¯
B	A	R			F	¯	C			I	V	
O	U	¯	B	U	R	S	T		A	D	A	M
		E	L	K			E	S	P			
P	U	R	E	E	S		D	I	P	P	E	R
I	L	I	E		H	M	O		L	A	D	E
N	E	E	D		E	M	U		E	R	I	E
T	E	S	S		P	E	T		T	E	E	D

Yesterday's answer 12-18



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Christina Aguilera, 40; Katie Holmes, 42; Brad Pitt, 57; Steven Spielberg, 74.

Happy Birthday: Pick up the pace, and strive to turn this year into something special. Focus on your health, well-being and stature. Evaluate the past, then take all your best qualities, skills and experience and find a way to make your dreams come true. You'll have the discipline to achieve things you never thought possible. Trust and believe in yourself. Your numbers are 3, 16, 20, 27, 32, 38, 47.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* You are heading into an upswing that can change your life forever. Whether you decide to learn something new, change your job or make a move that supports a better lifestyle, the result will favor you. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Be careful not to take on more than you can handle. A project you take on will lead to uncertainty if you don't understand what's expected of you before you begin. Ask questions to avoid being put in an awkward position. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Someone will let you down if you believe everything you hear. Show compassion, but don't take on troubles that don't belong to you. Focus on what you want and how best to achieve your goals. Love and romance will lead to a lifestyle change. ✪✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Pay more attention to learning, advancement and personal growth. Look for alternative lifestyles that offer less stress and more time to focus on what you enjoy doing. Look for opportunities, and don't hesitate when something good comes along. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Focus on exercising, finishing a project or making plans with someone special. An energetic approach to life and love will lead to positive changes and the chance to start something new. Romance and kind gestures will lead to personal happiness. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Someone close to you will withhold information that can affect a decision you are trying to make. Look for expert advice, and you'll avoid being manipulated by someone looking out for his or her interests. Proceed with caution. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Too much or too little will lead to trouble. Look at the choices you have and weigh the pros and cons carefully. Don't feel you have to act in haste. Time spent with someone you love will ease stress. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Slow down, take a deep breath and rethink your plans. A creative outlet will open your mind to options you haven't considered. You may desire change, but it has to be the right move if you want to pursue your dreams. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Put your plans in motion. You'll have what it takes to win favors and persuade others to invest time and money in what you want to pursue. Love and romance are encouraged, and a promise someone makes will change your life. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Align yourself with people who share your work ethic, and strive to reach a common goal. Set up a space at home that caters to health and fitness, personal growth and advancement. Plan something special with someone you love. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Stop worrying about what others are doing, and concentrate on your pursuits. How you approach a project will determine the outcome. Put greater emphasis on taking physical action and getting things done. Concrete results will impress someone you want on your team. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Don't trust a peer who is competing with you. Be secretive about your intentions, and don't share your ideas until you are ready to present what you have to offer. A change made in haste will lead to unexpected setbacks. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are dynamic, engaging and playful. You are disciplined and resourceful.

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SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		8	6	2	7	5		
6								9
				9				
1			3		2			8
5		2				3		1
7			4		8			6
				8				
4								7
		6	7	3	5	1		

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 12/18

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	2	8	3	5	7	4	1	9
7	1	5	9	6	4	8	3	2
9	3	4	8	1	2	5	6	7
2	4	7	1	9	5	3	8	6
3	8	1	4	7	6	2	9	5
5	9	6	2	3	8	1	7	4
1	6	3	5	2	9	7	4	8
4	5	9	7	8	3	6	2	1
8	7	2	6	4	1	9	5	3

Difficulty Level ★★★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

KYRA SEDGWICK **Solution: 10 letters**

M	D	P	E	C	K	F	M	C	B	E	A	L	H	B
T	A	L	B	R	E	N	D	A	L	R	I	G	O	S
S	S	N	A	I	V	P	C	A	E	M	I	R	C	I
E	M	E	H	W	I	O	C	Y	C	E	N	H	M	V
S	O	C	T	A	N	I	E	N	L	M	E	D	I	A
A	N	I	M	A	T	E	D	N	O	I	L	O	A	R
M	T	T	L	I	E	T	S	M	S	C	M	Ⓡ	M	T
E	A	P	R	I	L	R	A	O	E	A	Ⓞ	A	I	R
G	N	C	S	A	O	E	G	N	R	Ⓛ	I	D	F	E
N	A	O	C	A	V	E	D	W	Ⓔ	L	L	E	R	H
I	S	M	L	A	E	O	F	Y	L	U	J	P	T	T
Z	S	L	E	N	R	O	L	I	V	E	R	U	R	O
A	Y	S	F	R	B	E	W	T	R	I	R	T	A	M
M	E	N	I	R	O	L	H	C	A	S	C	Y	E	O
A	T	A	L	K	Y	R	E	L	L	E	T	E	H	N

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Ally, Amazing, Animated, Bacon, Born, Brenda, Call, Care, Cavedweller, Chief, Chlorine, Closer, Crime, Critical, Deputy, Ellery, Family, First, Gamer, Girl, Greatest, Heart, July, Kevin, Kiss, Leigh, Life, Lion, Loverboy, Manhattan, McBeal, Media, Miami, Montana, Mother, Oliver, Peck, Plan, Role, Rosenwald, Ruth, Sesame, Sosie, Talk, Travis, Travolta, Vice, William

Yesterday's Answer: Individual

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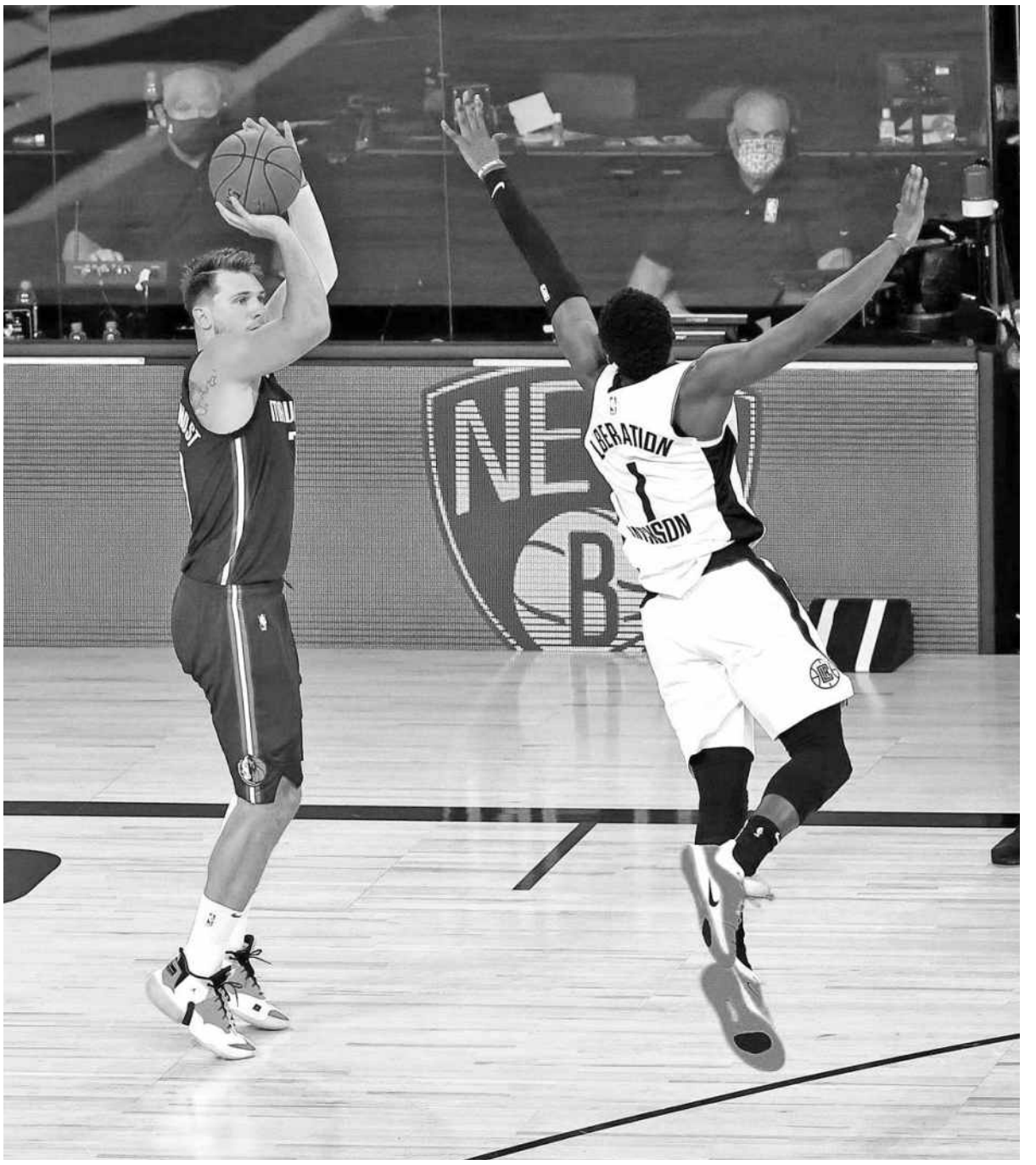
Luka beats LeBron, Giannis as early MVP favorite



In this Aug. 23, 2020 file photo, Dallas Mavericks' Luka Doncic, left, hits a winning three-point basket against Los Angeles Clippers' Reggie Jackson (1) during overtime of Game 4 of an NBA first-round playoff series in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

DALLAS—Luka Doncic got everyone's attention last season.

He had a big improvement for the Dallas Mavericks after a strong rookie season. He averaged 28.8 points, 9.4 rebounds and 8.8 assists. His buzzer-beating 3-pointer against the Los Angeles Clippers in the playoffs was perhaps the most iconic moment from the NBA's Orlando bubble.

That's why, even though Giannis Antetokounmpo is coming off two straight MVPs and LeBron James just won a title with the Los Angeles Lakers, the 21-year-old Doncic is the favorite to win MVP at BetMGM.

The NBA's regular season starts Tuesday, and BetMGM has offered odds on who will win most of the league's major awards. The most surprising number of them all might be Doncic's MVP odds.

Six players have better than 20-to-1 odds to win NBA MVP, led by Doncic and a couple of stars with multiple MVP awards already; Doncic +400; Antetokounmpo +500; James +800; Anthony Davis +900; Steph Curry +1100; and James Harden +1600

It seems odd that James or Antetokounmpo wouldn't be on top of that list, but there are good reasons. With James, it seems likely that the Lakers will sit him more than usual, given that the NBA Finals ended in mid-October and the offseason was much shorter than usual.

Antetokounmpo might be the victim of voter fatigue. There have been only three players to win three MVPs in a row: Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain and Larry Bird. The only three-peat in the last 52 years is Bird, and his last MVP came 34 years ago. Antetokounmpo could be the best player in the league and still have a tough time winning. Voters generally look for new blood.

Not only will Antetokounmpo have to fight off Doncic, who came close to averaging 30-10-10 in his second season, there are plenty of reasonable picks for the award including some longer shots. Jayson Tatum of the Boston Celtics (+2500) will have a bigger role, and a pair at 80-to-1 odds in Trae Young of the Atlanta Hawks and Zion Williamson of the New Orleans Pelicans have the talent and star power to be great long-shot lottery tickets.

It could be one of the most intriguing NBA MVP races in a while.

Here's a glimpse at the odds for the NBA's other major awards this season.

Rookie of the year: LaMelo Ball (+400), James Wiseman (+450) and Anthony Edwards (+450) are the favorites. But there are questions about all of them and this could be a year for a surprise rookie of the year winner.

Obi Toppin (+650) will get a push from the New York hype train if he's good right away. And it's not like there's any reason for the Knicks to not play him full-time minutes. Another player who could put up nice numbers on a bad team is Tyrese Haliburton (+1600) of the Sacramento Kings. Haliburton has looked good in the preseason and like the Knicks with Toppin, there's no real reason for the Kings to not give him a bunch of minutes.

Defensive player of the year: Rudy Gobert and Anthony Davis are co-favorites at +300 and reigning DPOY Giannis Antetokounmpo is next at +450. It's tough for a guard to win but Marcus Smart of the Boston Celtics (+2500) is intriguing. Smart has been on the NBA's all-defensive first team two years in a row and he could see even more minutes with Kemba Walker's knee injury.

Most improved player: If you can pick this award, you'll have a nice payday. Nobody is lower than 12-to-1 odds. Denver Nuggets guard Jamal Murray is the favorite at +1200. He was great in the bubble and has been a very good player for a few years so it's hard to argue for him improving that much. His teammate, Michael Porter Jr., has been hyped since high school and might be better value at +1400.

Sixth man of the year: It's a weird award to bet on because you need a player to be good, but not good enough to get into the starting lineup. Jordan Clarkson of the Utah Jazz is the favorite at +700. Tyler Herro of the Miami Heat looks like a great pick at +1400 after how he played in the bubble, but he might find himself in the starting lineup most of the season.

Coach of the year: If you can figure out which team will play the highest above preseason expectations, you can guess coach of the year. New Brooklyn Nets coach Steve Nash is a fun co-favorite at +900, with Monty Williams of the Phoenix Suns joining him. One name further down the list that checks some boxes is Stan Van Gundy of the New Orleans Pelicans at +2000. He is a known commodity, and if the Pelicans improve in Zion Williamson's second season, Van Gundy could get plenty of credit in his first year with the team. ***(NBC)***

Antetokounmpo wants to repay Bucks' loyalty

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo said he appreciated the love the city of Milwaukee has shown him ever since his arrival as an 18-year-old rookie from Greece.

So the reigning two-time MVP decided to show his loyalty to the place where he's spent his entire NBA career.

"It's the place I want to be," Antetokounmpo said Wednesday, one day after signing a supermax extension with the Bucks. "It's the place I want to raise my kids. I feel good here. My family feels good here, so I'm good."

Antetokounmpo could have become a free agent at the end of the upcoming season if he hadn't agreed to the deal, reportedly a five-year extension worth $228 million. Plenty of NBA teams were arranging their financial plans with the hope the 6-foot-11 "Greek Freak" would become available.

He instead stuck around and said it was important to him that his loyalty be considered part of his legacy.

"I'm a man of my word," Antetokounmpo said. "This is big. This is big. Being on a team that trusted me, believed in me, took care of me, took care of my family. I always want to give back and I've been trying to give back since day one, since I've been here. I've got more to give."

Family means plenty to Antetokounmpo, who became a father earlier this year and has one brother (Thanasis) on the Bucks and another (Kostas) on the Los Angeles Lakers.

As he discussed what this contract extension means to him, he referenced his own father, Charles Antetokounmpo, who died of a heart attack in September 2017.

"I know he's dancing right now," Antetokounmpo said. "He's extremely happy for what we've accomplished and he's extremely proud of us and who we are as human beings."

Antetokounmpo is hoping to give the Bucks their first NBA title since Kareem Abdul-Jabbar led them to the 1971 championship. The Bucks have posted the NBA's best regular-season record each of the last two years but lost to Miami in a second-round series last season after falling to Toronto in the 2019 Eastern Conference finals.

Meanwhile, LeBron James and Anthony Davis returned to the court for the Los Angeles Lakers, less than a week before the start of the regular season — and just over two months after winning the NBA title.

This short offseason could be particularly tough on the Lakers after their run to the championship, but James and Davis played for the first time this preseason Wednesday night when Los Angeles was at Phoenix. Davis sank a turnaround to start the game, and the Lakers led 53-44 at halftime. James had 11 points in the first two quarters and Davis had 10.

The Lakers, who beat Miami to win the championship Oct. 11, start the new season against the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday night.

In addition to James and Davis, Kyle Kuzma was in the starting lineup for the Lakers on Wednesday, along with new acquisitions Dennis Schroder and Marc Gasol.

Elsewhere on Wednesday night, the New York Knicks rallied from a 17-point, fourth-quarter deficit to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 100-93. Julius Randle scored 18 points for the Knicks and RJ Barrett and Kevin Knox II had 16 apiece.

"Once we got some energy from getting stops, I thought that gave us a lot more energy on offense," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said.

Also on Wednesday, Chicago beat Oklahoma City 124-103, and Portland played at Denver.

Former Thunder coach Billy Donovan returned to Oklahoma City as Chicago's coach. He led the Thunder to the playoffs last season before deciding not to return.

Harden ducks trade talks

James Harden finally broke his media blackout on Wednesday, speaking to reporters for the first time since he arrived late to Houston Rockets training camp last week. He didn't say much, choosing to focus on his recent activities with the team instead of addressing the swirling rumors about his trade request.

Harden also wouldn't talk about newly promoted GM Rafael Stone, only saying "we haven't had a conversation" when asked if he has confidence in him. Harden did have great things to say about coach Stephen Silas, who has been dealing with Harden media circus for over a week now.

NFL owners delay decision on 17-game regular season

NEW YORK (AP)—NFL owners have delayed a decision on implementing a 17-game regular season for 2021.

During a teleconference call Wednesday that replaced the usual December gathering of owners in Dallas, they opted to push back any move on the expanded season until early in 2021. The NFL and the players' union agreed during collective bargaining talks earlier this year to adding one regular-season game to the schedule, but not before next season.

"We had a lengthy discussion on this, obviously it's an important decision for us," Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "We did not take any votes with respect to committing to do it. In the collective bargaining agreement, we have that right to do it."

A scheduling formula for a 17th game was approved unanimously: an interconference matchup, based on divisional standings from the preceding season, and on a rotating divisional basis. The idea is to maintain facilitating competitive fairness; creating additional value through quality matchups; and preserving the objectivity of the scheduling process, the league said.

"It obviously comes into play with respect with our future media arrangements that we obviously are contemplating," he added. "We expect a decision will be made on that in the next several weeks."

The length of the preseason would be reduced, as well, if a 17th match is added.

Goodell said the league plans to invite vaccinated health care workers to the Super Bowl as guests. No set number of invitees has been determined for the Feb. 7 game in Tampa.

In a letter to Rob Higgins, president of the host committee for Super Bowl 55, that was obtained by The Associated Press, Goodell wrote that he wanted to "honor and thank health care workers for their extraordinary service during pandemic" as well as promote the importance of vaccinations and the wearing of masks in public.

Goodell added in the letter: "We all know that over the past year, these frontline workers have put their own lives at risk to the benefit of society and we owe them our ongoing gratitude. We also know that they will remain essential for months to come to treat those who are ill and administer vaccines. We hope that in some small way, this initiative will inspire our country and recognize these true American heroes as we look forward to a better and healthier year."

AP

In this Dec. 8, 2019 file photo, the San Francisco 49ers and New Orleans Saints get set at the line of scrimmage during an NFL game in New Orleans.

The NFL plans for fans to attend the game.

"We have not landed on a specific capacity yet, and we will work on that with the medical community in the weeks ahead," said Peter O'Reilly, who oversees major event planning for the league. "Public health officials will drive every decision we make around this subject."

Goodell attended the Buccaneers' victory over Minnesota on Sunday and "was incredibly impressed by the stadium and improvements they made. We are looking forward to one of the most memorable and meaningful games in our history."

The commissioner acknowledged that playing through the pandemic has provided plenty of lessons, and the NFL will confer with the NFL Players Association after the Super Bowl to discuss 2020 measures that might make sense to keep in a post-COVID-19 landscape.

Changes worthy of further consideration include aspects of the virtual NFL draft; the training camp acclamation period; expanded practice squads; and unlimited callbacks from injured reserve.

"This has been a period of learning. I think it's forced us to think differently and innovate and we'll look at that and see how we implement it going forward," Goodell said.

The owners also approved the Tennessee Titans realigning ownership, with Amy Adams Strunk remaining the primary owner. Goodell said the matter should be completed by the end of December.

"I think it strengthens our ownership in a way that is very positive," Goodell said.

No to local bubbles

NFL teams won't be allowed to create local bubbles during the postseason by mandating that players stay in a hotel, except for the night before a game.

"Clubs may not require players and staff to stay at a hotel in their local area," reads a league memo obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press. "This decision is based upon an analysis of the frequency of positive cases in the league compared to the risk of significant spread among players and staff gathered for an extensive period of time at one hotel."

Teams will be allowed to continue paying for players who want to move into a hotel to avoid the risk of catching COVID-19 from family or roommates throughout the postseason, according to the memo.

When teams stay in hotels before games, players and staff now will be required to wear a tracing device until they return to their rooms for the night whether staying at home or on the road.

The NFL also reminded teams that gathering socially at team hotels remains prohibited, while requirements to wear masks and physical distance from each other are still in effect.

In the postseason, teams will be reimbursed for using two planes to travel to road games. The limits on how many people can travel remain unchanged, and the NFL reminded teams to assign seats strategically to reduce risks of spreading the virus.

MLB reclassifies Negro Leagues as major league

NEW YORK (AP)—Willie Mays will add some hits to his record, Monte Irvin's big league batting average should climb over .300 and Satchel Paige may add nearly 150 victories to his total.

Josh Gibson, the greatest of all Negro League sluggers, might just wind up with a major league record, too.

The statistics and records of greats like Gibson, Paige and roughly 3,400 other players are set to join Major League Baseball's books after MLB announced Wednesday it is reclassifying the Negro Leagues as a major league.

MLB said Wednesday it was "correcting a longtime oversight in the game's history" by elevating the Negro Leagues on the centennial of its founding. The Negro Leagues consisted of seven leagues, and MLB will include records from those circuits between 1920-48. The Negro Leagues began to dissolve one year after Jackie Robinson became MLB's first Black player with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947.

Those leagues were excluded in 1969 when the Special Committee on Baseball Records identified six official "major leagues" dating to 1876.

"It is MLB's view that the Committee's 1969 omission of the Negro Leagues from consideration was clearly an error that demands today's designation," the league said in a statement.

The league will work with the Elias Sports Bureau to review Negro Leagues statistics and records and figure out how to incorporate them into MLB's history. There was no standard method of record keeping for the Negro Leagues, but there are enough box scores to stitch together some of its statistical past.

For instance, Mays could be credited with 17 hits from his 1948 season with the Alabama Black Barons. Irvin, a teammate of Mays' with the New York Giants, could see his career average climb from .293 to .304 if numbers listed at Baseball-Reference from his nine Negro League seasons are accurate. And Paige, who currently is credited with 28 major league wins, should add at least 146 to his total.

While some have estimated Gibson slugged over 800 homers during 16 Negro League seasons, it's unlikely that enough records exist for him to officially pass Barry Bonds for the career record at 762.

Depending on what Elias and MLB rule, though, Gibson could wind up with another notable record. His .441 batting average in 1943 would be the best season mark ever, edging Hugh Duffy's .440 from 1894. Gibson's line came in fewer than 80 games, however, far short of the modern standard of 162.

"We couldn't be more thrilled by this recognition of the significance of the Negro Leagues in Major League Baseball history," said Edward Schauder, legal representative for Gibson's estate and co-founder of the Negro Leagues Players Association. "Josh Gibson was a legend who would have certainly been a top player in the major leagues if he had been allowed to play."

MLB said it considered input from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, the Negro League Researchers and Authors Group and studies by other baseball authors and researchers.

"The perceived deficiencies of the Negro Leagues' structure and scheduling were born of MLB's exclusionary practices, and denying them major league status has been a double penalty, much like that exacted of Hall of Fame candidates prior to Satchel Paige's induction in 1971," baseball historian John Thorn said. "Granting MLB status to the Negro Leagues a century after their founding is profoundly gratifying."

Mayweather, Laila Ali elected to Hall of Fame

CANASTOTA, N.Y. (AP) —Floyd Mayweather, who captured 11 world titles in five weight divisions and retired unbeaten, former heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko, and Laila Ali have been elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame and Museum.

The Class of 2021 announced Tuesday also includes former Olympic champion Andre Ward, Ann Wolfe, Marian Trimiar, and Dr. Margaret Goodman. Elected posthumously were: lightweight champion Davey Moore, Jackie Tonawanda, cut man Freddie Brown, manager-trainer Jackie McCoy, journalist George Kimball, and television executive Jay Larkin.

Honorees were selected by members of the Boxing Writers Association and a panel of international boxing historians. Induction day is scheduled for June 13 and also will include last year's class, which was postponed by the novel coronavirus pandemic. The Class of 2020 includes: Bernard Hopkins, Juan Manuel Marquez, Shane Mosley, Christy Martin, Lucia Rijker, Barbara Buttrick, Frank Erne, Paddy Ryan, Lou DiBella, Kathy Duva, Dan Goossen, Bernard Fernandez and Thomas Hauser.

Born in 1977 in Grand Rapids, Michigan into a fighting family, Mayweather compiled an 84-6 amateur record that included three National Golden Gloves titles and a bronze medal at the 1996 Olympic Games. He turned pro in 1996 and captured his titles in five weight divisions, getting it started with an eighth-round knockout of Genaro Hernandez for the WBC junior lightweight title in just his 18th pro bout.

AP
In this May 2, 2015 file photo, Floyd Mayweather Jr., left, connects with a right to the head of Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines during their welterweight title fight in Las Vegas.

Trained by his father, Floyd Sr., and uncle Roger, the fighter nicknamed "Money" retired in 2017 with a record of 50-0 (27 KOs) following a crossover bout and knockout of mixed martial arts star Conor MacGregor.

"It is a great honor for me to be inducted ... as a first-ballot nominee," Mayweather said. "Throughout my career, I gave everything I could to the sport of boxing, and now, to be recognized by one of the most prestigious honors in the sport for that hard work and dedication is very humbling."

The 6-foot-6 Klitschko capped a 134-6 (65 KOs) amateur career by winning super heavyweight gold at the 1996 Olympic Games. He turned pro the same year in Germany and won 24 straight bouts before losing to Ross Purrity. He rebounded to defeat Chris Byrd for the WBO heavyweight title and in 2006 stopped Byrd again for the IBF/IBO titles to begin a dominant nine-year title reign that included 18 successful defenses.

Nicknamed "Dr. Steelhammer," the native of Kazakhstan was heavyweight champion longer than anyone in history (12 years, 2 days) and finished with a pro record of 64-5 (53 KOs).

Ali also retired unbeaten with a 24-0 record (21 KOs) that included a 2003 win over Christy Martin. The 5-10 Ali used a precise jab and powerful right hand to register an 87.5 knockout percentage, living up to her nickname, "She Bee Stingin'."

Tonawanda, who will be enshrined as a Trailblazer, began boxing in the early 1970s and, with sanctioned women's bouts scarce, spent the majority of her career on the underground female boxing circuit. Denied a professional boxing license from the New York State Athletic Commission in 1974 because of her gender, she filed a sex discrimination suit in 1975 and, after a protracted legal battle that involved lawsuits by other women, the judge ruled in her favor.

Along with Cat Davis and Trimiar, Tonawanda was among the first women granted a license by New York, on Sept. 19, 1978. She was the first female boxer to compete at Madison Square Garden, registering a second-round stoppage of Larry Rodaina in a mixed martial arts bout. The 5-9 Tonawanda, dubbed "The Female Ali," also sparred with Muhammad Ali at his training camp and worked as his bodyguard. She died of colon cancer in 2009 at age 75.

Meanwhile, YouTuber-turned-amateur boxer Jake Paul pulled no punches on Tuesday as he called out Ireland's former UFC champion and king of trash talk Conor McGregor in a foul-mouthed tirade that sent social media into a frenzy.

Paul, fresh off a brutal knockout of former NBA point guard Nate Robinson, offered McGregor $50 million to step into the ring.

"My team sent you a $50 million offer this morning—50 million cash, proof of funds, the biggest fight offer you've ever been offered," Paul said while performing his best impersonation of McGregor, holding a cigar in one hand and a glass of whiskey in the other.

"But, you're scared to fight me, Conor! You're ducking me because you don't want to lose to a YouTuber. You're 0-1 as a boxer. I'm 2-0 as a boxer."

Paul, whose brother Logan—also a social media influencer—will face Floyd Mayweather in February in an equally bizarre exhibition bout, also took aim at Dustin Poirier, McGregor's next opponent, with a bizarre claim that his dog had more followers on Instagram than the 31-year-old American.

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added that they supported the program as a way to promote an active lifestyle on island.

Former NMIFA officials David Khorram, Perry Tenorio, Vince Stravino, and Lyn Tenorio also gave congratulatory messages and recalled the program's humble beginnings. Stravino said there were a lot of struggle, but with the hard work of the people passionate about the sport and the help of the Guam Football Association and other NMIFA supporters, the FA was able to achieve a great goal.

Sugao Kambe and Kiyoshi Sekiguchi, who served as NMI national coaches, were witnessed to those challenges as they worked with the inexperienced, but dedicated Commonwealth players.

"I remember when we played against North Korea in Guam in 2010 and we lost, 26-0. The following year, we won against Macau, 2-1, with the same players. Everybody worked hard to get better every game and through the continued efforts of NMIFA officials, the players remained motivated," Sekiguchi said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
In this screen grab, former Northern Mariana Islands Football Association director Vince Stavino gives a congratulatory message to NMIFA for becoming an ordinary member of the Asian Football Confederation.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Community members and leaders give NMIFA president Jerry Tan a round of applause for steering NMI soccer to a historic feat.

The time and effort that Sekiguchi and Kambe spent with the CNMI players plus the relentless work of former and current NMIFA officials paved the way for the Commonwealth's acceptance to the AFC family.

"When I came here (2017), I saw a big potential for football development because of the genuine passion from all the people who had been involved or are still involved with the program. They proved that 'nothing is impossible,' that's why we achieved this goal and this is also a good message to our players, especially the young ones," Mita said.

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at 8:30am.

Meanwhile, Teack joined Krishnan and Tony Deleon Guerrero in the Top 3 of last weekend's event.

The February Ace was three strokes behind the leaders after delivering a net 74. The 14-handicapper Teack carded a 49 in the first nine holes and finished strong with his 39 in the last nine.

In the closest to the pin contest, Frances Sablan won on the par-3, No. 174-yard No. 3, while Krishnan and Rick Kautz prevailed on the 148-yard No. 13 and 137-yard No. 17, respectively.

For the longest drive competition, Rene Batallones delivered on the par-5, 477-yard No. 2, while Juan "Pan" Guerrero triumphed in another par-5 hole—the 461-yard No. 18.

Luka beats LeBron, Giannis as early MVP favorite

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Mita honors NMI soccer pillars

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

In this undated file photo, Northern Mariana Islands Football Association technical director Michiteru Mita gets ready to facilitate a national team training session at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

NMIFA vice president Vickie Izuka acknowledges the people who helped NMI soccer reach a milestone during the 30th Asian Football Confederation Congress held virtually last week.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

In this file photo, former CNMI Men's National Team coach Kiyoshi Sekiguchi answers a question during a press conference for an Asian Football Confederation-sanctioned tournament in 2016.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

To see the NMI become an ordinary member of the Asian Football Confederation under his watch is definitely an honor, but Northern Mariana Islands Football Association technical director Michiteru Mita was quick to credit their recent success to the people that built the foundation of the sport in the Commonwealth.

Mita was alluding to NMI's previous coaches, officials, and technical staff that started from scratch when NMIFA was established in 2005. Fifteen years later, the seeds that NMI soccer pillars planted bore a big fruit—acceptance to the AFC as a full member last week during the 30th AFC Congress held virtually.

"I would like to appreciate their tremendous hard work. It is very hard to achieve this because we have many challenges like the size of population and limited human and financial resources. But the NMI soccer family's contribution and dedication for the sport made this possible," said Mita, who also serves as the NMI Men's National Team's head coach.

The people that helped grow NMI soccer celebrated with NMIFA, as they gave congratulatory messages virtually and wished the association continued success.

"I knew that this day will come because of the commitment of the people that carried on where I left off—Jerry (NMIFA president Jerry Tan), Vickie (vice president Vickie Izuka), Patty (former Executive Committee member Patricia Coleman), Norman (Executive Committee member Norman Del Rosario), and everyone involved in the program," NMIFA founding director Sue Knecht said.

"Just seeing the pictures of the field (NMI Soccer Training Center), a great place for the community to play, and having proper games, it's just amazing," Knecht, who was also a former president of the MP United Football Club.

Former CNMI Tuberculosis Control program director Richard Brostrom, whose kids also played soccer on Saipan, recalled how they started with only 20 players that later grew into 50 and kept increasing as more and more people got involved with NMIFA. He

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SGA Ace of Aces cast almost complete

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Saipan Golfers Association is close to filling up the 12 slots for its Ace of Aces club championship after Tony Deleon Guerrero secured the penultimate berth last Sunday.

Deleon Guerrero matched the best net score in the November Ace tournament after shooting a 71 on the west course of the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort. The 16-handicapper tallied a 42 on the front nine and player better on the back with his 38 for a gross 87, tying Das Krishnan for first place in last weekend's competition.

Krishnan, who sports a 13 handicap, had a gross 84 built around his 41 and 43 on the front and back nines, respectively. Krishnan went on to beat Deleon Guerrero in the tiebreak for first place, but since the former had already won the May Ace title, the latter was awarded the November plum.

Deleon Guerrero and Krishnan will be vying for the Ace of Aces top honors against defending club champion and Attorney General Edward Manibusan (January Ace winner), Jung Eun Teack (February), Nick Sablan (March), Juan "Pan" Guerrero (April), Larry Deleon Guerrero (June), Steve Balakrishna (July), Ed Sablan (August), John "Nanni" Cruz (September), Alex Tudela (October), and the December Ace winner, which will be determined this Sunday when SGA plays at the Kingfisher Golf Links. The December Ace competition will start at 9am, while tee off is

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